THE WORKS

OF THE

REV. ROBERT HALL, A.M.

VOL. IV.

TRACTS, POLITICAL AND MISCELLANEOUS.

Relig. [redacted]
Theol.

THE

WORKS

OF

ROBERT HALL, A.M.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE,

BY

OLINTHUS GREGORY, LL.D., F.R.A.S.

AND

A CRITICAL ESTIMATE OF HIS CHARACTER AND WRITINGS,

BY JOHN FOSTER,

AUTHOR OF "ESSAYS ON DECISION OF CHARACTER," ETC.

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CHRISTIANITY CONSISTENT WITH A LOVE OF FREEDOM:

BEING

AN ANSWER

TO

A SERMON,

LATELY PUBLISHED, BY THE REV. ——

[Published in 1791.]

PREFACE.

It may be proper just to remark, that the animadversions I have made on Mr. ———'s Sermon did not arise from my conviction of there being any thing even of plausibility in his reasonings, but from an apprehension, that certain accidental and occasional prejudices might give some degree of weight to one of the weakest defences of a bad cause that was ever undertaken. I have taken up more time in showing that there is no *proper connexion* between the unitarian doctrine and the principles of liberty than the subject may seem to require; but this will not be thought superfluous by those who recollect that that idea seems to be the great hinge of Mr. ———'s discourse, and that it appears amongst the orthodox part of the dissenters to have been productive already of unhappy effects. I shall only add, that these remarks would have appeared much sooner but for severe indisposition, and that I was induced to write them chiefly from a persuasion that they might perhaps, in the present instance, have somewhat of additional weight as coming from one who is *not* an unitarian.

CAMBRIDGE,
Sept. 17, 1791.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

"CHRISTIANITY consistent with a Love of Freedom," was written when Mr. Hall was twenty-seven years of age: and he never would consent to its re-publication. He continued to think the main principles correct and important; but he regarded the tone of animadversion as severe, sarcastic, and unbecoming. Three or four editions have, however, been printed surreptitiously; and one of them, which now lies before me, is so complete an imitation of the original edition of 1791, as usually to escape detection. It is printed with an old-fashioned type, and on dingy coloured paper, to suit its assumed age. But on comparing it closely with the genuine edition, I find that three of the capital letters, on different pages, have too modern and broad a face; and, on holding up the paper on which it is printed to a strong light, I perceive a water-mark which gives the date 1818 to the *paper* of a pamphlet which purports to be *printed* in 1791! If any of even the lowest class of booksellers will have recourse to such contemptible forgeries as this, an author is evidently no longer master of his intellectual property, nor can he when he pleases withdraw it from the public eye.

This, though one of the earliest productions laid by Mr. Hall before the public, is, with the exception already adverted to, by no means calculated to deteriorate his reputation. It contains some powerful reasoning as well as some splendid passages, and the concluding four or five pages exhibit a fine specimen of that union of severe taste, and lofty genius, and noble sentiment, which is evinced, I think, more frequently in his compositions than in those of any other modern author.

I have no fear of incurring blame for having cancelled throughout the name of the individual against whom Mr. Hall's strictures were levelled. Venerable for his age, and esteemed for his piety, who would now voluntarily cause him, or those who love him, a pang?

ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY,
June 1, 1831.

CHRISTIANITY

CONSISTENT WITH A LOVE OF FREEDOM,

&c.

THIS is a period distinguished for extraordinary occurrences, whether we contemplate the world under its larger divisions, or in respect to those smaller communities and parties, into which it is broken and divided. We have lately witnessed, with astonishment and regret, the attempts of a celebrated orator to overthrow the principles of freedom, which he had rendered himself illustrious by defending; as well as to cover with reproach the characters of those by whom, in the earlier part of life, he was most caressed and distinguished. The success of these efforts is pretty generally known, and is such as it might have been expected would have been sufficient to deter from similar attempts. But we now behold a dissenting minister coming forth to the public under the character of a flatterer of power, and an *accuser of his brethren.* If the splendid eloquence that adorns every part of Mr. BURKE's celebrated book cannot shelter the author from confutation, and his system from contempt, Mr. ———, with talents far inferior, has but little to expect in the same cause. It is not easy to conceive the motives which could impel him to publish his sermon. From his own account it should seem he was anxious to disabuse the legislature, and to con-

vince them there are many amongst the dissenters who highly disapprove the sentiments and conduct of the more patriotic part of their brethren. How far he may be qualified from his talents or connexions, as a mouth, to declare the sentiments of any considerable portion of the dissenters, I shall not pretend to decide, but shall candidly confess, there are not wanting amongst us persons who are ready upon all occasions to oppose those principles on which the very existence of our dissent is founded. Every party will have its apostates of this kind; it is our consolation, however, that their numbers are comparatively small, that they are generally considered as our reproach, and that their conduct is in a great measure the effect of necessity, as they consist almost entirely of persons who can only make themselves heard by confusion and discord. If our author wishes to persuade the legislature the friends of arbitrary power are conspicuous for their number or their rank in the dissenting interest, he has most effectually defeated his own intentions, as scarce any thing could give them a meaner opinion of that party, in both these respects, than this publication of its champion. The sermon he has obtruded upon the public is filled with paradoxes of so singular a complexion, and so feebly supported, that I find it difficult to lay hold of any thing in the form of argument, with sufficient steadiness for the purpose of discussion.

I shall endeavour, however, with as much distinctness as I am able, to select the fundamental principles on which the discourse rests, and shall attempt, as I proceed, to demonstrate their falsehood and danger.

Our author's favourite maxim is the inconsistency of the christian profession with political science, and the certain injury its spirit and temper must sustain from every kind of interference with the affairs of government. Political subjects he considers as falling within the *peculiar* province of the irreligious; ministers, in particular, he maintains, should ever observe, amidst the concussions of party, an entire neutrality; or if at any time they depart from their natural line of conduct, it

should only be in defence of the measures of government, in allaying dissensions, and in convincing the people they are incompetent judges of their rights. These are the servile maxims that run through the whole of this extraordinary discourse; and, that I may give a kind of method to the following observations upon them, I shall show in the first place the relation christianity bears to civil government, and its consistency with political discussion, as conducted either by ordinary christians or ministers; in the next place, I shall examine some of the pretences on which the author founds his principles.

Section I.

On the Duty of common Christians in Relation to Civil Polity.

The momentous errors Mr. ——— has committed, appear to me to have arisen from an inattention to the proper design of christianity, and the place and station it was intended to occupy. On this subject I beg the reader's attention to the following remarks:—

1st. Christianity was subsequent to the existence and creation of man. It is an institution intended to improve and ennoble our nature, not by subverting its constitution, or its powers, but by giving us a more enlarged view of the designs of Providence, and opening a prospect into eternity. As the existence of man is not to be *dated* from the publication of christianity, so neither is that order of things that flows from his relation to the present world, altered or impaired by that divine system of religion. Man, under the christian dispensation, is not a new structure erected on the ruin of the former; he may rather be compared to an ancient fabric, restored, when it had fallen into decay, and beautified afresh by the hand of its original founder. Since christianity has made its appearance in the world, he has continued the

same kind of being he was before, fills the same scale in the order of existence, and is distinguished by the same propensities and powers.

In short, christianity is not a reorganization of the principles of man, but an institution for his improvement. Hence it follows, that whatever rights are founded on the constitution of human nature, cannot be diminished or impaired by the introduction of revealed religion, which occupies itself entirely on the interests of a future world, and takes no share in the concerns of the present in any other light than as it is a state of preparation and trial. Christianity is a discovery of a future life, and acquaints us with the means by which its happiness may be secured; civil government is altogether an affair of the present state, and is no more than a provision of human skill, designed to ensure freedom and tranquillity during our continuance on this temporary stage of existence. Between institutions so different in their nature and their object, it is plain no real opposition can subsist; and if ever they are represented in this light, or held inconsistent with each other, it must proceed from an ignorance of their respective genius and functions. Our relation to this world demands the existence of civil government; our relation to a future renders us dependent on the aid of the christian institution; so that in reality there is no kind of contrariety between them, but each may continue without interference in its full operation. Mr. ———, however, in support of his absurd and pernicious tenets, always takes care to place civil government and christianity in opposition, whilst he represents the former as carrying in it somewhat antichristian and profane. Thus he informs us, *that civil government is a stage, erected on which, man acts out his character, and shows great depravity of heart.* All interference in political parties, he styles *an alliance with the world, a neglecting to maintain our separation, and to stand upon our own hallowed ground. There is one way*, says he, by which he means to insinuate there is only one, *in which you may all interfere in the government of your country, and that is by prayer to God, by whom kings reign.* These

passages imply that the principles of civil polity and religion must be at perpetual variance, as without this supposition, unsupported as it is in fact, they can have no force or meaning.

2d. Mr.——— misleads his reader by not distinguishing the innocent entertainments or social duties of our nature from those acts of piety which fall within the *immediate province* of christianity.

The employments of our particular calling, the social ties and endearments of life, the improvement of the mind by liberal inquiry, and the cultivation of science and of art, form, it is true, no part of the christian system, for they flourished before it was known; but they are intimately connected with the happiness and dignity of the human race. A christian should act ever consistent with his profession, but he need not always be attending to the peculiar duties of it. The profession of religion does not oblige us to relinquish any undertaking on account of its being *worldly*, for we must then go out of the world; it is sufficient, that every thing in which we engage, is of such a nature, as will not violate the principles of virtue, or occupy so much of our time or attention, as may interfere with more sacred and important duties.

Mr. ——— observes, *Jesus Christ uniformly waved interesting himself in temporal affairs, especially in the concerns of the then existing government;* and hence he draws a precedent to regulate the conduct of his followers. That our Saviour did not intermeddle with the policy of nations, I am as willing as our author to admit; for the improvement of this, any more than any other science which might be extremely short and defective, formed no part of his mission, and was besides rendered quite unnecessary, by that energy of mind which, prompted by curiosity, by our passions and our wants, will ever be abundantly sufficient to perpetuate and refine every civil or human institution. He never intended that his followers, on becoming christians, should forget they were men, or consider themselves as idle or uninterested spectators on the great theatre of

life. The author's selection of proofs is almost always unhappy, but in no instance more than the present, when he attempts to establish his doctrine of the unlawfulness of a christian interfering in the administration of government on our Saviour's silence respecting it, a circumstance of itself sufficient to support a quite contrary conclusion; for if it had been his intention to discountenance the study of political subjects, he would have furnished us, without doubt, with some general regulations, some stated form of policy, which should for ever preclude the necessity of such discussion; or, if that were impracticable, have let us into the great secret of living without government; or, lastly, have supplied its place, by a theocracy similar to that of the Jews. Nothing of this has he accomplished, and we may therefore rest assured, the political affairs of nations are suffered to remain in their ancient channels, and to be conducted as occasions may arise, by christians or by others, without distinction.

3d. The principles of freedom ought, in a more peculiar manner, to be cherished by christians, because they alone can secure that liberty of conscience, and freedom of inquiry, which is essential to the proper discharge of the duties of their profession. A full toleration of religious opinions, and the protection of all parties in their respective modes of worship, are the natural operations of a free government; and every thing that tends to check or restrain them, materially affects the interests of religion. Aware of the force of religious belief over the mind of man, of the generous independence it inspires, and of the eagerness with which it is cherished and maintained, it is towards this quarter the arm of despotism first directs its attacks, while through every period, the imaginary right of ruling the conscience has been the earliest assumed, and the latest relinquished. Under this conviction, an enlightened christian, when he turns his attention to political occurrences, will rejoice in beholding every advance towards freedom in the government of nations, as it forms not only a barrier to the encroachments of tyranny, but a security to the diffusion and establishment of truth. A considerable portion of

personal freedom may be enjoyed, it is true, under a despotic government, or, in other words, a great part of human actions may be left uncontrolled; but with this an enlightened mind will never rest satisfied, because it is at best but an indulgence flowing from motives of policy, or the lenity of the prince, which may be at any time withdrawn by the hand that bestowed it. Upon the same principles, religious toleration may have an accidental and precarious existence, in states whose policy is the most arbitrary; but, in such a situation, it seldom lasts long, and can never rest upon a secure and permanent basis, disappearing for the most part along with those temporary views of interest or policy, on which it was founded. The history of every age will attest the truth of this observation.

Mr. ———, in order to prepare us to digest his principles, tells us in the first page of his discourse, *that the gospel dispensation is spiritual, the worship it enjoins simple and easy, and if liberty of conscience be granted, all its exterior order may be regarded under every kind of human government.* This is very true, but it is saying no more, than that the christian worship may be always carried on, if it is not interrupted; a point, I presume, no one will contend with him. The question is, can every form of government furnish a *security* for liberty of conscience; or, which is the same thing, can the rights of private judgment be safe under a government, whose professed principle is, that the subject has no *rights at all*, but is a vassal dependent on his superior lord. Nor is this a futile or chimerical question, it is founded upon fact. The state to which it alludes, is the condition at present of more than half the nations of Europe; and if there were no better patriots than this author, it would soon be the condition of them all. The blessings which we estimate highly, we are naturally eager to perpetuate, and whoever is acquainted with the value of religious freedom, will not be content to suspend it on the clemency of a prince, the indulgence of ministers, or the liberality of bishops, if ever such a thing existed; he will never think it secure, till it has a

constitutional basis; nor even then, till by the general spread of its principles, every individual becomes its guarantee, and every arm ready to be lifted up in its defence. Forms of policy may change, or they may survive the spirit that produced them; but when the seeds of knowledge have been once sown, and have taken root in the human mind, they will advance with a steady growth, and even flourish in those alarming scenes of anarchy and confusion, in which the settled order and regular machinery of government are wrecked and disappear.

Christianity, we see then, instead of weakening our attachment to the principles of freedom, or withdrawing them from our attention, renders them doubly dear to us, by giving us an interest in them, proportioned to the value of those religious privileges which they secure and protect.

Our author endeavours to cast reproach on the advocates for liberty, by attempting to discredit their piety, for which purpose he assures us, to be active in this cause is disreputable, and brings the reality of our religion into just suspicion. *Who are the persons*, he asks, *that embark? Are they the spiritual, humble, and useful teachers, who travail in birth, till Christ be formed in the hearts of their hearers? No. They are philosophical opposers of the grand peculiarities of christianity.* It is of little consequence of what descriptions of persons the friends of freedom consist, provided their principles are just, and their arguments well founded; but here, as in other places the author displays an utter ignorance of facts. Men who know no age but their own, must draw their precedents from it; or, if Mr. ——— had glanced only towards the history of England, he must have remembered, that in the reigns of Charles the First and Second, the chief friends of freedom were the puritans, of whom many were republicans, and the remainder zealously attached to a *limited* monarchy. It is to the distinguished exertions of this party, we are in a great measure indebted for the preservation of our free and happy constitution. In those distracted and turbulent

times which preceeded the restoration of Charles the Second, the puritans, who to a devotion the most fervent, united an eager attachment to the doctrines of grace, as they are commonly called, displayed on every occasion a love of freedom, pushed almost to excess; whilst the cavaliers, their opponents, who ridiculed all that was serious, and, if they had any religion at all, held sentiments directly repugnant to the tenets of Calvin, were the firm supporters of arbitrary power If the unitarians, then, are at present distinguished for their zeal in the cause of freedom, it cannot be imputed to any alliance between their religious and political opinions, but to the conduct natural to a minority, who, attempting bold innovations, and maintaining sentiments very different from those which are generally held, are sensible they can only shelter themselves from persecution and reproach, and gain an impartial hearing from the public, by throwing down the barriers of prejudice, and claiming an unlimited freedom of thought.

4th. Though christianity does not assume any immediate direction in the affairs of government, it inculcates those duties, and recommends that spirit, which will ever prompt us to cherish the principles of freedom. It teaches us to check every selfish passion, to consider ourselves as parts of a great community, and to abound in all the fruits of an active benevolence. The particular operation of this principle will be regulated by circumstances as they arise, but our obligation to cultivate it is clear and indubitable. As this author does not pretend that the nature of a government has no connexion with the felicity of those who are the subjects of it, he cannot without the utmost inconsistence deny, that to watch over the interests of our fellow-creatures in this respect, is a branch of the great duty of social benevolence. If we are bound to protect a neighbour, or even an enemy, from violence, to give him raiment when he is naked, or food when he is hungry, much more ought we to do our part, toward the preservation of a free government; the only basis on which the enjoyment of these blessings can securely rest. He who breaks the

fetters of slavery, and delivers a nation from thraldom, forms, in my opinion, the noblest comment on the great law of love, whilst he distributes the greatest blessing which man can receive from man; but next to that is the merit of him, who in times like the present, watches over the edifice of public liberty, repairs its foundations, and strengthens its cement, when he beholds it hastening to decay.

It is not in the power of every one, it is true, to benefit his age or country, in this distinguished manner, and accordingly it is no where expressly commanded; but where this ability exists, it is not diminished by our embracing christianity, which consecrates every talent to the public good. On whomsoever distinguished endowments are bestowed, as christians we ought to rejoice, when instead of being wasted in vain or frivolous pursuits, we behold them employed on objects of the greatest general concern; amongst which those principles of freedom will ever be reckoned, which determine the destiny of nations, and the collective felicity of the human race.

5th. Our author expresses an ardent desire for the approach of that period, when all men will be christians. I have no doubt that this event will take place, and rejoice in the prospect of it; but whenever it arrives, it will be fatal to Mr. ———'s favourite principles; for the professors of christianity must then become politicians, as the wicked, on whom he at present very politely devolves the business of government, will be no more: or, perhaps he indulges a hope, that even then, there will be a sufficient number of sinnners left to conduct political affairs, especially as wars will then cease, and social life be less frequently disturbed by rapine and injustice. It will still, however, be a great hardship, that a handful of the wicked should rule innumerable multitudes of the just, and cannot fail, according to our present conceptions, to operate as a kind of check on piety and virtue. How Mr. ——— will settle this point I cannot pretend to say, except he imagines men will be able to subsist without any laws or civil regulations, or intends to revive

the long exploded tradition of Papias, respecting the personal reign.

Had christianity been intended only for the benefit of a few, or as the distinction of a small fraternity, there might have been some pretence for setting its profession in opposition to human policy, since it might then have been conducted without their interference; but a religion which is formed for the whole world, and will finally be embraced by all its inhabitants, can never be clogged with any such impediment as would render it repugnant to the social existence of mankind.

Section II.

On the Duty of Ministers in Respect to Civil Polity.

Mr. ——— is extremely severe upon those of his brethren, who, forsaking the quiet duties of their profession as he styles them, have dared to interfere in public affairs. This he considers a most flagrant offence, an alarming departure from their proper province; and in the fulness of his rage he heaps upon them every epithet which contempt or indignation can suggest; calls them meddling, convivial, political ministers, devoid of all seriousness and dignity. It is rather extraordinary, this severe correction should be administered by a man, who is, at that moment, guilty of the offence he is chastising; reproaches political preachers in a political sermon; ridicules theories of government, and at the same time advances one of his own, a most wretched one indeed, but delivered in a tone the most arrogant and decisive. It is not political discussion then, it seems, that has ruffled the gentle serenity of our author's temper; for he too, we see, can bend, when it pleases him, from his spiritual elevation, and let fall his oracular responses on the duty of subjects and of kings. But the persons on whom he denounces his anathemas have presumed to adopt a system of politics inconsistent with his own, and it is less his piety than his pride, that

is shocked and offended. Instead of submitting to be moulded by any adept in cringes, and posture-master of servility, they have dared to assume the bold and natural port of freemen.

It will be unnecessary to say much on the duty of ministers, in respect to political affairs, as many of the reflections which this subject would suggest, have been already advanced under a former head. A few considerations, however, present themselves here, to which I shall beg the reader's attention.

The duties of the ministerial character, it will on all hands be confessed, are of a nature the most sacred and important. To them should be directed the first and chief attention of every person who sustains it, and whatever is found to interfere with these momentous engagements, should be relinquished as criminal and improper. But there is no profession which occupies the mind so fully, as not to leave many intervals of leisure, in which objects that lie out of its immediate province, will have a share of our attention; and I see not, why these periods of recess may not be employed with as much dignity and advantage, in acquiring an acquaintance with the principles of government, as wasted in frivolous amusements, or an inactive indolence. Mr. ———, with his usual confidence, lays it down as a maxim, that the science of politics cannot be cultivated, without a neglect of ministerial duties; and one would almost be tempted to suppose he had published his sermon as a confirmation of this remark; for a more striking example of political ignorance in a teacher of religion, has scarcely ever been exhibited. As far, therefore, as the preacher himself is concerned, the observation will be admitted in its full force, but he has surely no right to make his own weakness the standard of another's strength.

Political science, as far as it falls under our present contemplation, may be considered in two points of view. It may either intend a discussion of the great objects for which governments are formed, or it may intend a consideration of the means which may be employed, and

the particular contrivances that may be fallen upon to accomplish those objects. For example, in vindicating the revolution of France, two distinct methods may be pursued with equal propriety and success. It may be defended upon its *principles* against the friends of arbitrary power, by displaying the value of freedom, the equal rights of mankind, the folly and injustice of those regal or aristocratic pretensions by which those rights were invaded; accordingly, in this light it has been justified with the utmost success. Or it may be defended upon its *expedients*, by exhibiting the elements of government which it has composed, the laws it has enacted, and the tendency of both to extend and perpetuate that liberty which is its ultimate object. But though each of these modes of discussion fall within the province of politics, it is obvious the degree of inquiry, of knowledge, and of labour they require, differs widely. The first is a path which has been often and successfully trod, turns upon principles which are common to all times and places, and which demand little else to enforce conviction, than calm and dispassionate attention. The latter method, involving a question of expediency, not of right, would lead into a vast field of detail, would require a thorough acquaintance with the situation of persons and of things, as well as long and intimate acquaintance with human affairs. There are but few ministers who have capacity or leisure to become great practical politicians. To explore the intricacies of commercial science, to penetrate the refinements of negociation, to determine with certainty and precision the balance of power, are undertakings, it will be confessed, which lie very remote from the ministerial department; but the *principles* of government, as it is a contrivance for securing the freedom and happiness of men, may be acquired with great ease.

These principles our ancestors understood well, and it would be no small shame if, in an age which boasts so much light and improvement as the present, they were less familiar to us. There is no class of men to whom this species of knowledge is so requisite, on several ac-

counts, as dissenting ministers. The jealous policy of the establishment forbids our youth admission into the celebrated seats of learning; our own seminaries, at least till lately, were almost entirely confined to candidates for the ministry; and as on both these accounts, amongst us, the intellectual improvement of our religious teachers rises superior to that of private christians, in a greater degree than in the national church, the influence of their opinions is wider in proportion. Disclaiming, as they do, all pretensions to dominion, their public character, their professional leisure, the habits of study and composition which they acquire, concur to point them out as the natural guardians, in some measure, of our liberties and rights. Besides, as they are appointed to teach the whole compass of social duty, the mutual obligations of rulers and subjects will of necessity fall under their notice; and they cannot explain or enforce the *reasons* of submission, without displaying the *proper end* of government, and the *expectations* we may naturally form from it; which, when accurately done, will lead into the very depths of political science.

There is another reason, however, distinct from any I have yet mentioned, flowing from the nature of an established religion, why dissenting ministers, above all men, should be well skilled in the principles of freedom. Wherever, as in England, religion is established by law with splendid emoluments and dignities annexed to its profession, the clergy, who are candidates for these distinctions, will ever be prone to exalt the prerogative, not only in order to strengthen the arm on which they lean, but that they may the more successfully ingratiate themselves in the favour of the prince, by flattering those ambitious views and passions which are too readily entertained by persons possessed of supreme power. The boasted alliance between church and state, on which so many encomiums have been lavished, seems to have been little more than a compact between the priest and the magistrate, to betray the liberties of mankind, both civil and religious. To this the clergy, on their part at least, have continued steady, shunning inquiry, fearful of

change, blind to the corruptions of government, skilful to *discern the signs of the times*, and eager to improve every opportunity, and to employ all their art and eloquence to extend the prerogative and smooth the approaches of arbitrary power. Individuals are illustrious exceptions to this censure; it however applies to the body, to none more than to those whose exalted rank and extensive influence determine its complexion and spirit. In this situation, the leaders of that church, in their fatal attempt to recommend and embellish a slavish system of principles, will, I trust, be ever carefully watched and opposed by those who hold a similar station amongst the dissenters; that, at all events, there may remain one asylum to which insulted freedom may retire unmolested. These considerations are sufficient to justify every dissenting minister in well-timed exertions for the public cause, and from them we may learn what opinion to entertain of Mr. ———'s weak and malignant invectives.

From the general strain of his discourse, it would be natural to conclude he was an enemy to every interference of ministers on political occasions; but this is not the case. *Ministers*, says he, *may interfere as peacemakers, and by proper methods should counteract the spirit of faction raised by persons who seem born to vex the state.* After having taught them to remain in a quiet neutrality, he invests them all at once with the high character of arbiters between the contending parties, without considering that an office of so much delicacy would demand a most intimate acquaintance with the pretensions of both. Ministers, it should seem, instead of declining political interference, are to become such adepts in the science of government, as to distinguish with precision the complaints of an oppressed party from the clamours of a faction, to hold the balance between the ruler and the subject with a steady hand, *and to point out, on every occasion, and counteract the persons who are born to vex the state.* If any should demand by what means they are to furnish themselves for such extraordinary undertakings, he will learn that it is not by political investiga-

tion or inquiry this profound skill is to be attained, but by a studied inattention and neglect; of which this author, it must be confessed, has given his disciples a most edifying example in his first essay. There is something miraculous in these endowments. This battle is not to the strong, nor these riches to men of understanding. Our author goes a step farther, for when he is in the humour for concessions no man can be more liberal. *So far as revolution*, says he, *are parts of God's plan of government, a christian is not to hinder such changes in states as promise an increase of happiness to mankind. But no where in the New Testament can a christian find countenance in becoming a forward active man in regenerating the civil constitutions of nations.* A christian is not to oppose revolutions, as far as they are parts of God's plan of government. The direction which oracles afford has ever been complained of for its obscurity; and this of Mr. ———, though no doubt it is fraught with the profoundest wisdom, would have been more useful, had it furnished some criterion to distinguish those transactions which *are* parts of God's plan of government. We have hitherto imagined the elements of nature, and the whole agency of man, are comprehended within the system of Divine Providence; but, as in this sense every thing becomes a part of the divine plan, it cannot be his meaning. Perhaps he means to confine the phrase *of God's plan of government* to that portion of human agency which is consistent with the divine will and promises, or, as he says, with an increase of happiness to mankind. If this should be his intention, the sentiment is just, but utterly subversive of the purpose for which it is introduced, as it concurs with the principle of all reformers in leaving us no other direction in these cases than reason and experience, determined in their exertions by a regard to the general happiness of mankind. On this basis the wildest projectors profess to erect their improvements. On this principle, too, do the dissenters proceed, when they call for a repeal of the test act, when they lament the unequal representation of parliament, when they wish to see

a period to ministerial corruption, and to the encroachments of an hierarchy equally servile and oppressive; and thus, by one unlucky concession, this author has admitted the ground-work of reform in its fullest extent, and has demolished the whole fabric he was so eager to rear. He must not be offended if principles thus corrupt, and thus feebly supported, should meet with the contempt they deserve, but must seek his consolation in his own adage, as the correction of folly is certainly *a part of God's plan of government.* The reader can be at no loss to determine whom the author intends by a *busy active man in regenerating the civil constitutions of nations.* The occasion of the sermon, and complexion of its sentiments, concur in directing us to Dr. Priestley, a person whom the author seems to regard with a more than *odium theologicum*, with a rancour exceeding the measure even of his profession. The religious tenets of Dr. Priestley appear to me erroneous in the extreme; but I should be sorry to suffer any difference of sentiment to diminish my sensibility to virtue, or my admiration of genius. From him the poisoned arrow will fall pointless. His enlightened and active mind, his unwearied assiduity, the extent of his researches, the light he has poured into almost every department of science, will be the admiration of that period, when the greater part of those who have favoured, or those who have opposed him, will be alike forgotten. Distinguished merit will ever rise superior to oppression, and will draw lustre from reproach. The vapours which gather round the rising sun, and follow it in its course, seldom fail at the close of it to form a magnificent theatre for its reception, and to invest with variegated tints, and with a softened effulgence, the luminary which they cannot hide.*

* Whether or not the beautiful passage in the text was suggested by a floating vague recollection of the following lines of POPE, or were an avowed imitation of them cannot now be determined. But be this as it may, I think it will be readily admitted, that the rhythm and harmony of the passage in prose are decidedly superior to those in the lines of the poet·

"Envy will merit, as its shade, pursue,
But, like a shadow, prove the substance true.

It is a pity, however, our author in reproaching characters so illustrious, was not a little more attentive to facts; for unfortunately for him, Dr. Priestley has not in any instance displayed that disaffection to government with which he has been charged so wantonly. In his Lectures on History, and his Essay on Civil Government, which of all his publications fall most properly within the sphere of politics, he has delineated the British constitution with great accuracy, and has expressed his warm admiration of it as the best system of policy the sagacity of man has been able to contrive. In his Familiar Letters to the Inhabitants of Birmingham, a much later work, where the seeds of that implacable dislike were scattered which produced the late riots, he has renewed that declaration, and has informed us, that he has been pleasantly ridiculed by his friends as being an unitarian in religion, and a trinitarian in politics. He has lamented, indeed, in common with every enlightened citizen, the existence of certain corruptions, which, being gradually introduced into the constitution, have greatly impaired its vigour; but in this he has had the honour of being followed by the prime minister himself, who began his career by proposing a reform in parliament, merely to court popularity it is true, at a time when it would not have been so safe for him to insult the friends of freedom after having betrayed their interest, as he has since found it.

Dr. Priestley has, moreover, defended with great ability and success the principles of our dissent, exposing, as the very nature of the undertaking demands, the folly and injustice of all clerical usurpations; and on this account, if on no other, he is entitled to the gratitude of his brethren. In addition to this catalogue of crimes, he has ventured to express his satisfaction on the liberation of France; an event which, promising a firmer establish-

For envied wit, like Sol eclips'd, makes known
Th' opposing body's grossness, not its own.
When first that sun too powerful beams displays,
It draws up vapours which obscure its rays:
But e'en those clouds at last adorn its way,
Reflect new glories and augment the day."—Ed.

ment to liberty than any recorded in the annals of the world, is contemplated by the friends of arbitrary power throughout every kingdom of Europe with the utmost concern. These are the demerits of Dr. Priestley, for which this political astrologist and sacred calculator of nativities, pronounces upon him that he is *born to vex the state.* The best apology candour can suggest, will be to hope Mr. ——— has never read Dr. Priestley's political works; a conjecture somewhat confirmed from his disclaiming all attention to political theories, and from the extreme ignorance he displays, through the whole of his discourse, on political topics. Still it is to be wished he would have condescended to understand what he means to confute, if it had been only to save himself the trouble and disgrace of this publication.

The manner in which he speaks of the Birmingham riots, and the cause to which he traces them, are too remarkable to pass unnoticed.

When led, says he, speaking of the sufferers, *by officious zeal, from the quiet duties of their profession into the Senator's province: unhallowed boisterous passions in others; like their own, God may permit to chastise them.* For my own part I was some time before I could develope this extraordinary passage; but I now find the darkness in which it is veiled is no more than that mystic sublimity which has always tinctured the language of those who are appointed to interpret the counsels of heaven.

I would not have Mr. ——— deal too freely in these visions, lest the fire and illumination of the prophet should put out the reason of the man, a caution the more necessary in the present instance, as it glimmers so feebly already in several parts of his discourse, that its extinction would not be at all extraordinary. We are, no doubt, much obliged to him for letting us into a secret we could never have learnt any other way. We thank him heartily for informing us that the Birmingham riots were a judgement, and, as we would wish to be grateful for such an important communication, we would whisper in his ear in return, that he should be particularly careful not to suffer this itch of prophesying to

grow upon him, men being extremely apt, in this degenerate age, to mistake a prophet for a madman, and to lodge them in the same place of confinement. The best use he could make of his mantle would be to bequeath it to the use of posterity, as for the want of it I am afraid they will be in danger of falling into some very unhappy mistakes. To their unenlightened eyes it will appear a reproach, that in the eighteenth century, an age that boasts its science and improvement, the first philosopher in Europe, of a character unblemished, and of manners the most mild and gentle, should be torn from his family, and obliged to flee an outcast and a fugitive from the murderous hands of a frantic rabble; but when they learn that there were not wanting teachers of religion, who secretly triumphed in these barbarities, they will pause for a moment, and imagine they are reading the history of Goths or of Vandals. Erroneous as such a judgement must appear in the eyes of Mr. ———, nothing but a ray of his supernatural light could enable us to form a juster decision. Dr. Priestley and his friends are not the first that have suffered in a public cause; and when we recollect, that those who have sustained similar disasters have been generally conspicuous for a superior sanctity of character, what but an acquaintance with the counsels of heaven can enable us to distinguish between these two classes of sufferers, and, whilst one are the favourites of God, to discern in the other the objects of his vengeance. When we contemplate this extraordinary endowment, we are no longer surprised at the superiority he assumes through the whole of his discourse, nor at that air of confusion and disorder which appears in it; both of which we impute to his dwelling so much in the insufferable light, and amidst the coruscations and flashes of the divine glory; a sublime but perilous situation, described with great force and beauty by Mr. Gray:

> "He passed the flaming bounds of place and time:
> The living throne, the sapphire blaze,
> Where angels tremble while they gaze,
> He saw; but blasted with excess of light,
> Closed his eyes in endless night."

Section III.

On the Pretences Mr. ——— advances in favour of his Principles.

Having endeavoured to justify the well-timed exertions of christians and of ministers, in the cause of freedom, it may not be improper to examine a little more particularly under what pretences Mr. ——— presumes to condemn this conduct.

1st. The first that naturally presents itself, is drawn from those passages of scripture, in which the design of civil government is explained, and the duty of submission to civil authority is enforced. That on which the greatest stress is laid, is found in the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. "Let every soul be sub-"ject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of "God: the powers which be, are ordained of God. "Whoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the "ordinance of God: and they that resist, shall receive "unto themselves damnation. The Ruler is the Minis-"ter of God to thee for good. But if thou doest that "which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the sword "in vain. Wherefore ye must be subject, not only for "wrath, but conscience sake." This passage, which, from the time of Sir Robert Filmer to the present day, has been the strong hold of the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, will admit of an easy solution, by attending to the nature of christianity, and the circumstances of its professors, during the period in which it was written. The extraordinary privileges and dignity conferred by the gospel on believers, must have affected the minds of the first christians, just emerging from the shades of ignorance, and awakened to new hopes, with singular force. Feeling an elevation to which they were strangers before, and looking down upon the world around them as the vassals of sin and Satan, they might be easily tempted to imagine the restraint of laws could not extend to persons so highly privileged, and

that it was ignominious in the free men of Jesus Christ to submit to the yoke of idolatrous rulers. Natural to their situation as these sentiments might be, none could be conceived more detrimental to the credit and propagation of a rising religion, or more likely to draw down upon its professors the whole weight of the Roman empire, with which they were in no condition to contend. In this situation, it was proper for the apostle to remind christians, their religion did not interfere with the rights of princes, or diminish their obligation to attend to those salutary regulations which are established for the protection of innocence, and the punishment of the guilty. That this only was the intention of the writer, may be inferred from the considerations he adduces to strengthen his advice. He does not draw his arguments for submission from any thing *peculiar* to the *christian system*, as he must have done, had he intended to oppose that religion to the natural rights of mankind, but from the utility and necessity of civil restraints. "The Ruler is the Minister of God to thee for good," is the reason he urges for submission. Civil government, as if he had said, is a salutary institution, appointed to restrain and punish outrage and injustice, but exhibiting to the quiet and inoffensive, nothing of which they need to be afraid. "If thou doest that which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain." He is an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Christians were not to consider themselves privileged above their fellow-citizens, as their religion conferred upon them no civil immunities, but left them subject to all the ties and restraints, whatever they were, which could be justly imposed by the civil power on any other part of mankind.

The limits of every duty must be determined by its *reasons*, and the only ones assigned *here*, or that *can* be assigned for submission to civil authority, are its *tendency to do good;* wherever therefore this shall cease to be the case, submission becomes absurd, having no longer any *rational view*. But at what time this evil shall be judged to have arrived, or what remedy it may be proper to ap-

ply, christianity does not decide, but leaves to be determined by an appeal to natural reason and right. By one of the strangest misconceptions in the world, when we are taught that christianity does not bestow upon us any *new* rights, it has been thought to strip us of our *old;* which is just the same as it would be to conclude, because it did not first furnish us with hands or feet, it obliges us to cut them off.

Under every form of government, that civil order which affords protection to property, and tranquillity to individuals, must be obeyed; and I have no doubt, that before the revolution in France, they who are now its warmest admirers, had they lived there, would have yielded a quiet submission to its laws, as being conscious the social compact can only be considered as dissolved by an expression of the general will. In the mean time, they would have continued firm in avowing the principles of freedom, and by the diffusion of political knowledge, have endeavoured to train and prepare the minds of their fellow-citizens for accomplishing a change so desirable.

It is not necessary to enter into a particular examination of the other texts adduced by Mr. ——— in support of his sentiments, as this in Romans is by much the most to his purpose, and the remarks that have been made upon it may, with very little alteration, be applied to the rest. He refers us to the second chapter of the first Epistle of Peter. "Submit yourselves to every "ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be "to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto "them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evil "doers, and for the praise of them that do well." Here it is sufficient to remark, all that can be inferred from this passage is, that christians are not to hold themselves exempt from the obligation of obedience on account of their religion, but are to respect legislation as far as it is found productive of benefit in social life.

With still less propriety, he urges the first of Timothy, where, in the second chapter, we are "exhorted "to supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of

"thanks for all men, for kings, and for all that are in "authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable "life, in all godliness and honesty." I am unacquainted with any who refuse a compliance with this apostolical admonition, except the nonjurors* may be reckoned of this class, whose political sentiments are of a piece with our author's.

Whilst he pleads with so much eagerness for the duty of passive obedience, we are not, however, to suppose, he wishes to extend it to all mankind. He admits, *that society, under the wisest regulations, will degenerate, and there will be periods when associated bodies must be resolved again into their first principles.* All resistance to authority, every revolution, is not in his own opinion criminal; it is christians only, who are never to have a share in these transactions, never to assert their rights. With what different sentiments did the apostle of the Gentiles contemplate his character, when disdaining to accept a clandestine dismission from an unjust imprisonment, he felt a glow of indignant pride burn upon his cheek, and exclaimed with a Roman energy, "I was free born!"

2d. Another reason which this author assigns for a blind deference to civil authority is, that christianity is *distinct from and independent of human legislation.* This principle no protestant dissenter will be inclined to question, but, instead of lending any support to the system of passive obedience, it will overturn it from its foundation; for if religion be really distinct from, and independent of human legislation, it cannot afford any standard to ascertain its limits; as the moment it is applied to this purpose, it ceases to be a thing distinct and independent. For example, it is not doubted that a christian may lawfully engage in trade or commerce; but if it be asked why his profession does not interfere with such an undertaking, the proper reply will be, religion is a thing distinct and independent. Should it be again inquired, why a christian may become a trader,

* There are now no "nonjurors:" the people once so called have for many years prayed for the king.—Ed.

yet must not commit a theft, we should answer, that this latter action is not a thing distinct, or independent of religion, but falls immediately under its cognizance, as a violation of its laws. Thus it appears, that whatever portion of human conduct is really *independent* of religion, is lawful for that *very reason*, and can then only become criminal or improper, when it is suffered to intrench upon more sacred or important duties. The truth is, between two institutions, such as civil government and religion, which have a separate origin and end, no opposition can subsist, but in the brain of a distempered enthusiast.

The author's text confutes his doctrine, for had our Saviour annihilated our rights, he would have become a *judge* and *divider* over us, in the worst sense, if that could be said to be divided which is taken away. When any two institutions are affirmed to be distinct and independent, it can only mean, they do not *interfere ;* but that must be a genius of no common size, who can infer from religion not *interfering* with the rights of mankind, that they cease to be, or that the patrimony, over which our Lord declined to exercise *any authority*, he has scattered and destroyed.

3d. Similar to the last I have considered, is that pretence for excluding christians from any concern in political affairs, taken from the conduct of our Saviour. Mr. ——— tells us, that Christ uniformly waived interesting himself in the concerns of the then existing government; and to the same purpose he afterwards remarks, he always declined the functions of a civil magistrate.

The most careless reader will remark, the whole weight of this argument rests upon a supposition, that it is unlawful for a christian to sustain any other character in civil life, than that in which our Saviour literally appeared; a notion as extravagant as was ever nourished in the brain of the wildest fanatic. Upon this principle he must have gone through such a succession of offices, and engaged in such an endless variety of undertakings, that in place of thirty-three years, he needed to have

lived thirty-three centuries. On this ground the profession of physic is unlawful for a christian, because our Lord never set up a dispensary; and that of law, because he never pleaded at the bar. Next to the weakness of advancing such absurdity, is that of confuting it.

4th. The author, in proof of his political tenets, appeals to the devotional feelings of his hearers. "I ask "you," says he, "who make conscience of entering into "your closets, and shutting your doors, and praying to "your Father which seeth in secret; what subjects in-"terest you most then? Are not factious passions hush-"ed; the undue heat you felt in political disputation "remembered with sorrow?" He must be at a great loss for argument, who will have recourse to such loose and flimsy declamation. When engaged in devout admiration of the Supreme Being, every other object will be lost in the comparison; but this, though the noblest employment of the mind, was never intended to shut out all other concerns.

The affections which unite us to the world have a large demand upon us, and must succeed in their turn. If every thing is to be deemed criminal that does not interest the attention in the very moment of worship, political concerns are not the only ones to be abandoned, but every undertaking of a temporal nature, all labour and ingenuity must cease. Science herself must shroud her light. These are notions rather to be laughed at than confuted, for their extravagance will correct itself. Every attempt that has been made to rear religion on the ruins of nature, or to render it subversive of the economy of life, has hitherto proved unsuccessful, whilst the institutions that have flowed from it, are now scarcely regarded in any other light than as humiliating monuments of human weakness and folly. The natural vigour of the mind, when it has once been opened by knowledge, and turned towards great and interesting objects, will always overpower the illusions of fanaticism; or, could Mr. ———'s principles be carried into effect, we should soon behold men returning again to the state of savages, and a more than monkish barbarity and ignorance would

overspread the earth. That abstraction from the world it is his purpose to recommend, is in truth as inconsistent with the nature of religion, as with the state and condition of man; for christianity does not propose to take us *out* of the world, but to preserve us from the pollutions which are *in* it.

It is easy to brand a passion for liberty with the odious epithet of faction; no two things, however, can be more opposite. Faction is a combination of a few to oppress the liberties of many; the love of freedom is the impulse of an enlightened and presiding spirit, ever intent upon the welfare of the community, or body to which it belongs, and ready to give the alarm, when it beholds any unlawful conspiracy formed, whether it be of rulers or of subjects, with a design to oppress it. Every tory upholds a faction; every whig, as far as he is sincere and well informed, is a friend to the equal liberties of mankind. Absurd as the preacher's appeal must appear, on such an occasion, to the devout feelings of his hearers, we have no need to decline it. In those solemn moments, factious passions cannot indeed be too much hushed, but that warmth which animates the patriot, which glowed in the breast of a Sidney or a Hampden, was never chilled, or diminished, we may venture to affirm, in its nearest approaches to the uncreated splendour; and if it mingled with their devotion at all, could not fail to infuse into it a fresh force and vigour, by drawing them into a closer assimilation to that great Being, who appears under the character of the avenger of the oppressed, and the friend and protector of the human race.

5th. Lastly, the author endeavours to discredit the principles of freedom, by holding them up as intimately connected with the unitarian heresy. "We are not to "be surprised," he says, "if men who vacate the rule "of faith in Jesus Christ, should be defective in defer-"ence and in obedient regards to men, who are raised "to offices of superior influence, for the purposes of civil "order and public good." The persons he has in view are the unitarians, and that my reader may be in full

possession of this most curious argument, it may be proper to inform him, that an unitarian is a person who believes Jesus Christ had no existence till he appeared on our earth, whilst a trinitarian maintains, that he existed with the Father from all eternity. What possible connexion can he discern between these opinions and the subject of government?

In order to determine whether the supreme power should be vested in king, lords, and commons, as in England, in an assembly of nobles, as in Venice, or in a house of representatives, as in America or France, must we first decide upon the person of Christ? I should imagine we might as well apply to astronomy first, to learn whether the earth flattens at the poles. He explains what he means by *vacating* the rule of faith in Christ, when he charges the unitarians with a partial denial at least, of the inspiration of the Scripture, particularly the Epistles of St. Paul. But, however clear the inspiration of the Scriptures may be, as no one pleads for the inspiration of civil governors, the deference which is due to the first, as coming from God, can be no reason for an unlimited submission to the latter. Yet this is Mr. ———'s argument, and it runs thus. Every opposition to scripture is criminal, because it is inspired, and therefore every resistance to temporal rulers is criminal, though they are *not* inspired.

The number of passages in Paul's Epistles which treat of civil government is small, the principal of them have been examined, and whether they are inspired or not, has not the remotest relation to the question before us. The inspiration of an author adds weight to his sentiments, but makes no alteration in his meaning, and unless Mr. ——— can show that Paul inculcates unlimited submission, the belief of his inspiration can yield no advantage to his cause. Amongst those parties of christians who have maintained the inspiration of the Scriptures in its utmost extent, the number of such as have inferred from them the doctrine of passive obedience has been extremely small; it is, therefore, ridiculous to impute the rejection of this tenet by unitarians to a disbe-

lief of plenary inspiration. It behoves Mr. ——— to point out, if he is able, any one of the unitarians, who ever imagined that Paul means to recommend unlimited obedience; for till that is the case, it is plain their political opinions cannot have arisen from any contempt of that apostle's authority.

As there is no foundation in the nature of things, for imagining any alliance between heretical tenets and the principles of freedom, this notion is equally void of support from fact or history. Were the socinian sentiments, in particular, productive of any *peculiar impatience under* the restraints of government, this effect could not fail of having made its appearance on their first rise in Poland, while their influence was fresh and vigorous; but nothing of this nature occurred, nor was any such reproach cast upon them. That sect in England which has been always most conspicuous for the love of freedom, has for the most part held sentiments at the greatest remove from socinianism that can be imagined. The seeds of those political principles which broke out with such vigour in the reign of Charles the First, and have since given rise to the denomination of whigs, were sown in the latter end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, by the hand of the puritans, amongst whom the unitarian doctrine was then utterly unknown. The dissenters descended from those illustrious ancestors, and inheriting their spirit, have been foremost in defence of liberty, not only, or chiefly, of late, since the spread of the socinian doctrine, but before that system had gained any footing amongst us.

The knowledge and study of the Scriptures, far from favouring the pretensions of despotism, have almost ever diminished it, and been attended with a proportional increase of freedom. The union of protestant princes preserved the liberties of the Germanic body, when they were in danger of being overwhelmed by the victorious arm of Charles the Fifth; yet a veneration for the Scriptures, at a time when they had almost fallen into oblivion, and an appeal to their decisions in all points, was the grand characteristic of the new religion. If we look

into Turkey, we shall find the least of that impatience under restraints which Mr. ——— laments, of any place in the world, though Paul and his epistles are not much studied there.

There are not wanting reasons, which at first view, might induce us to conclude unitarianism was less favourable to the love of freedom than almost any other system of religious belief. If any party of christians were ever free from the least tincture of enthusiasm, it is the unitarian: yet that passion has by every philosopher been judged friendly to liberty; and to its influence, though perhaps improperly, some of its most distinguished exertions have been ascribed. Hume and Bolingbroke, who were atheists, leaned towards arbitrary power. Owen, Howe, Milton, Baxter, some of the most devout and venerable characters that ever appeared, were warmly attached to liberty, and held sentiments on the subject of government as free and unfettered as Dr. Priestley. Thus every pretence for confounding the attachment to freedom with the sentiments of a religious party, is most abundantly confuted both from reason and from fact. The zeal unitarians have displayed in defence of civil and religious liberty, is the spirit natural to a minority, who are well aware they are viewed by the ecclesiastical powers with an unparalleled malignity and rancour. Let the dissenters at large remember they too are a minority, a great minority, and that they must look for their security from the same quarter, not from the compliments of bishops, or presents from maids of honour.*

To abandon principles which the best and most enlightened men have in all ages held sacred, which the dissenters in particular have rendered themselves illustrious by defending, which have been sealed and consecrated by the blood of our ancestors, for no other reason

* Some of my readers perhaps need to be informed that I here allude to Mr. Martin, who, for similar services to those Mr. ——— is now performing, has been considerably caressed by certain bishops, who have condescended to notice and to visit him. I think we do not read that Judas had any acquaintance with the high priests till he came to transact business with them.

than that the unitarians chance to maintain them, would be a weakness of which a child might be ashamed! Whoever may think fit to take up the gauntlet in the socinian controversy will have my warmest good wishes; but let us not employ those arms against each other which were given us for our common defence.

Section IV.

On the Test Act.

Amidst all the wild eccentricities which, abounding in every part of this extraordinary publication, naturally diminish our wonder at any thing such a writer may advance, I confess I am surprised at his declaring his wish for the continuance of the Test Act. This law, enacted in the latter end of the reign of Charles the Second, to secure the nation from popery, when it stood upon the brink of that precipice, is continued, now that the danger no longer exists which first occasioned it, for the express purpose of preserving the church from the inroads of dissenters. That church, it must be remembered, existed for ages before it received any such protection; yet it is now the vogue to magnify its importance to that degree, that one would imagine it was its sole prop, whose removal would draw the whole fabric after it, or at least make it totter to its base. Whether these apprehensions were really entertained by the clergy who gave the signal for the commencement of hostilities on a late occasion, or whether they were only impelled by that illiberal tincture and fixed antipathy to all who differ from them, which hath ever marked their character, may be doubted; but to behold a dissenting minister joining with them in an unnatural warfare against his brethren, is a phenomenon so curious, that it prompts us to inquire into its cause. Let us hear his reasons. He and many others were convinced, he tells us, "that some of the "persons who applied for the repeal were influenced by "enmity against the doctrinal articles of the established

"church, and they could not sacrifice their pious regard "to truth, though in a church they had separated from, "to the policy of men, who, with respect to God our "Saviour, only consult how they may cast him down "from his excellency." When we hear the clergy exclaim that their church is in danger, we pretty well understand what they mean; they speak broad, as Mr. Burke says, and intend no more than that its emoluments are endangered; but when a serious dissenter expresses his pious regard to the doctrines of the church, it is the *truth* of those articles he must be supposed to have in view. Let us consider for a moment what advantage the Test Act is capable of yielding them. All those who qualify for civil offices, by a submission to this law, consist of two classes of people; they are either persons who are attached to the articles of the church, from whom therefore no danger could accrue; or they are persons who have signified their assent to doctrines which they inwardly disapprove, and who have qualified themselves for trust by a solemn act of religious deception. It is this latter class alone, it should be remembered, whom the Test Act can at all influence, and thus the only security this celebrated law can afford the articles of the church, is founded in a flagrant violation of truth in the persons who become their guarantees. Every attempt that has been made to uphold religion by the civil arm, has reflected disgrace upon its authors; but of all that are recorded in the history of the world, perhaps this is the most absurd in its principle, and the least effectual in its operation. For the truth of sacred mysteries in religion, it appeals to the corruptest principles of the human heart, and to those *only;* for no one can be tempted by the Test Act to profess an attachment to the doctrines of the church, till he has been already allured by the dignity or emolument of a civil office. By compelling all who exercise any function in the state, from the person who aspires to its highest distinctions, to those who fill the meanest offices in it, to profess that concurrence in religious opinions which is known never to exist, it is adapted beyond any other human invention, to spread

amongst all orders of men a contempt for sacred institutions, to enthrone hypocrisy, and reduce deception to a system! The truth of any set of opinions can only be perceived by *evidence*; but what evidence can any one derive from the mere mechanical action of receiving bread and wine at the hands of a parish priest? He who believes them already needs not to be initiated by any such ceremony; and by what magic touch those simple elements are to convert the unbeliever, our author, who is master of so many secrets, has not condescended to explain. He will not pretend to impute the first spread of these doctrines in the infancy of the christian religion, or their revival at the reformation, to any such means, since he imagines he can trace them in the New Testament. It is strange if that evidence which was powerful enough to introduce them where they were unknown, is not sufficient to uphold them where they are already professed and believed. At least, the Test Act, it must be confessed, has yielded them no advantage, for they have been controverted with more acrimony, and admitted by a smaller number of persons, since that law was enacted, than in any period preceding.

Were the removal of this test to overthrow the establishment itself, a consequence at the same time in the highest degree improbable, the articles of the church, if they are true, would remain unendangered, their evidence would continue unimpaired, an appeal to the inspired writings from which they profess to be derived would be open, the liberty of discussion would be admitted in as great an extent as at present; this difference only would occur, that an attachment to them would no longer be suspected of flowing from corrupt and sinister motives. They would cease to be with the clergy, the ladder of promotion, the cant of the pulpit, the ridicule of the schools. The futility of this or any other law, as a security to religious doctrines, may be discerned from this single reflection, that in the national church its own articles have, for a length of time, been either treated with contempt, or maintained with little sincerity, and no

zeal; whilst amongst the dissenters, where they have had no such aids, they have found a congenial soil, and continue to flourish with vigour.

On the political complexion of this test, as it does not fall so properly within my present view, I shall content myself with remarking, that harmless as it may appear at first sight, it carries in it the seeds of all the persecutions and calamities which have ever been sustained on a religious account. It proscribes not an individual who has been convicted of a crime, but a whole party, as unfit to be trusted by the community to which they belong; and if this stigma can be justly fixed on any set of men, it ought not to stop *here, or any where*, short of the actual excision of those who are thus considered as rotten and incurable members of the political body. In annexing to religious speculation the idea of political default, the principle of this law would justify every excess of severity and rigour. If we are the persons it supposes, its indulgence is weak and contemptible; if we are of a different description, the nature of its pretensions is so extraordinary as to occasion serious alarm, and call aloud for its repeal.

Mr. ———, indeed, calls this, and similar laws, a restraint very prudently imposed upon those who dissent from the established religion.* This restraint, however, is no less than a political annihilation, debarring them, though their talents were ever so splendid, from mingling in the counsels, or possessing any share in the administration of their country. With that natural relish for absurdity, which characterizes this author, he imagines they have justly incurred this evil for dissenting from an *erroneous* religion.

He tells us, in the course of his sermon,† that the grand "principle of separation from the church lies in the unworldly nature of our Saviour's kingdom." This reason for separation implies, that any attempt to blend worldly interests or policy with the constitution of a church, is improper; but how could this be done more

* Page 6. † Page 35.

effectually than by rendering the profession of its articles a preliminary step to every kind of civil pre-eminence? Yet this abuse, which in his own estimation is so enormous as to form the great basis of separation, he wishes to perpetuate; and all things considered, hopes "that which is at rest will not be disturbed." In another part of his discourse,* he asks what temporalities has the church of Christ to expect? It is the mother of harlots, which says, "I sit a queen, and shall see no sorrow." Would any one imagine this was the language of a man, who, in pleading for a Test Act, has rested the support of his creed on those very temporalities he affects so much to disdain, and has committed his religion to the arms of that mother of harlots to be reared and nourished! When speaking of the Test Act in the seventh page of his discourse, he thus expresses himself: "Surely the cross of Christ ought not to be insulted by persons eager to press into the temple of Mammon." Who could treat it with more poignant severity than is couched in this declaration? yet this is the language of a person who desires its continuance. In truth, his representations on this subject are pregnant with such contradictions, and rise above each other in so singular a gradation of absurdity, as will not be easily conceived, and perhaps hath scarce ever been equalled. At the very outset of his sermon, he declares, "Whenever the gospel is secularized it is debased and misrepresented, and in proportion to the quantity of foreign infusions is the efficacy of this saving health diminished." But human ingenuity would be at a loss to contrive a method of secularizing the gospel more completely, than by rendering it the common passport of all who aspire to civil distinctions. I am really weary of exposing the wild and extravagant incoherence of such a reasoner. From a man, who, professing to be the apologist of his party, betrays its interests, and exhibits its most illustrious members to reproach; who, himself a dissenter, applauds the penalties which the hierarchy has inflicted as a "*pru-*

* Page 26.

dent restraint;" who, with the utmost poignance, censures a law which he solemnly invokes the legislature to perpetuate; and proposes to secure the truths of religion, by the "profanation of its sacraments,"* by "debasing the gospel," and "insulting the cross;" any thing may be expected but consistence and decency. When such an author assures us he was not impelled by vanity to publish,† we may easily give him credit; but he should remember, though it may be a virtue to subdue vanity, it is base to extinguish shame. The tear which, he tells us, started from the eyes of his audience, we will hope, for their honour, was an effusion of regret, natural to his friends, on hearing him deliver sentiments which they considered as a disgrace to himself, and a calumny on his brethren. His affecting to pour contempt upon Dr. Price, whose talents and character were revered by all parties, and to hold him up as the *corrupter* of the dissenters, will not fail to awaken the indignation of every generous mind. Whether *they* were greater friends to their country, whose pride and oppression scattered the flames of discord across the Atlantic, poured desolation into the colonies, dismembered the empire, and involved us in millions of debt; or the man, who, with a warning voice, endeavoured to avert those calamities, posterity will decide.

He gives us a pompous enumeration ‡ of the piety, learning, and talents of a large body of his brethren who concur with him in a disapprobation of the theological and political tenets of the unitarians. The weakness of mingling them together has been shown already; but if these great and eminent men, whom the world never heard of before, possess that zeal for their religion they pretend, let them meet their opponents on the open field of controversy, where they may display their talents and prowess to somewhat more advantage than in *skulking* behind a *consecrated altar*.

There are many particulars, in the address and sermon, of an extraordinary complexion, which I have not

* Page 8. † Page 6. ‡ Ibid.

noticed at all, as it was not my intention to follow the author step by step, but rather to collect his scattered representations into some leading points of view. For the same reason, I make no remarks on his barbarous imagery; or his style, every where incoherent and incorrect, sometimes indecent, which cannot fail of disgusting every reader of taste. In a rude daubing peculiar to himself, where, in ridicule of Dr. Priestley, he has grouped together a *foreigner*, a *ship*, and *cargo* of *drugs*, he has unfortunately sketched his own likeness, except in the circumstance of the *ship*, with tolerable accuracy; for, without the apology of having been *shipped* into England, he is certainly a *foreigner* in his native tongue, and his publication will be allowed to be a *drug*.

Had he known to apply the remark with which his address commences, on the utility of accommodating instruction to the exigence of times, he would have been aware, that this is not a season for drawing off the eyes of mankind from political objects. They were, in fact, never turned towards them with equal ardour, and we may venture to affirm, they will long continue to take that direction. An attention to the political aspect of the world, is not now the fruit of an idle curiosity, or the amusement of a dissipated and frivolous mind, but is awakened and kept alive by occurrences as various as they are extraordinary. There are times when the moral world seems to stand still; there are others when it seems impelled towards its goal, with an accelerated force. The present is a period more interesting, perhaps, than any which has been known, in the whole flight of time. The scenes of Providence thicken upon us so fast, and are shifted with so strange a rapidity, as if the great drama of the world were drawing to a close.* Events have taken place, of late, and revolutions have been effected, which, had they been foretold a very few years ago, would have been viewed as visionary and extrava-

* This glowing picture, as accurately descriptive of recent events as of those it was intended to portray, might tempt us almost to fancy, that, after the revolution of a cycle of forty years, time had brought us back to the same state of things.—Ed.

gant; and their influence is yet far from being spent. Europe never presented such a spectacle before, and it is worthy of being contemplated, with the profoundest attention, by all its inhabitants. The empire of darkness and of despotism has been smitten with a stroke which has sounded through the universe. When we see whole kingdoms, after reposing for centuries on the lap of their rulers, start from their slumber, the dignity of man rising up from depression, and tyrants trembling on their thrones, who can remain entirely indifferent, or fail to turn his eye towards a theatre so august and extraordinary! These are a kind of throes and struggles of nature, to which it would be a sullenness to refuse our sympathy. Old foundations are breaking up; new edifices are rearing. Institutions which have been long held in veneration, as the most sublime refinements of human wisdom and policy, which age hath cemented and confirmed, which power hath supported, which eloquence hath conspired to embellish and opulence to enrich, are falling fast into decay. New prospects are opening on every side, of such amazing variety and extent, as to stretch farther than the eye of the most enlightened observer can reach.

Some beneficial effects appear to have taken place already, sufficient to nourish our most sanguine hope of benefits much more extensive. The mischief and folly of wars begin to be understood, and that mild and liberal system of policy adopted, which has ever indeed been the object of prayer to the humane and the devout, but has hitherto remained utterly unknown in the cabinets of princes. As the mind naturally yields to the impression of objects which it contemplates often, we need not wonder, if, amidst events so extraordinary, the human character itself should appear to be altering and improving apace. That fond attachment to ancient institutions, and blind submission to opinions already received, which has ever checked the growth of improvement, and drawn on the greatest benefactors of mankind danger or neglect, is giving way to a spirit of bold and fearless investigation. Man seems to be becoming more erect and

independent. He leans more on himself, less on his fellow-creatures. He begins to feel a consciousness in a higher degree of personal dignity, and is less enamoured of artificial distinctions. There is some hope of our beholding that simplicity and energy of character which marks his natural state, blended with the humanity, the elegance, and improvement of polished society.

The events which have already taken place, and the further changes they forebode, will open to the contemplative of every character, innumerable sources of reflection. To the philosopher they present many new and extraordinary facts, where his penetration will find ample scope in attempting to discover their cause, and to predict their effects. He will have an opportunity of viewing mankind in an interesting situation, and of tracing the progress of opinion through channels it has rarely flowed in before. The politician will feel his attention powerfully awakened, on seeing new maxims of policy introduced, new institutions established, and such a total alteration in the ideas of a great part of the world, as will oblige him to study the art of government as it were afresh. The devout mind will behold in these momentous changes the finger of God, and, discerning in them the dawn of that glorious period, in which wars will cease, and antichristian tyranny shall fall, will adore that unerring wisdom, whose secret operation never fails to conduct all human affairs to their proper issue, and impels the great actors on that troubled theatre, to fulfil, when they least intend it, the counsels of heaven, and the predictions of its prophets.

AN APOLOGY

FOR THE

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS,

AND FOR

GENERAL LIBERTY:

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED,

REMARKS ON BISHOP HORSLEY'S SERMON,

Preached on the 30*th January*, 1793.

[PUBLISHED IN 1793.]

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE THIRD EDITION.

Since this pamphlet was first published, the principles it aims to support have received confirmation from such a train of disastrous events, that it might have been hoped we should have learned those lessons from misfortunes which reason had failed to impress. Uninstructed by our calamities, we still persist in an impious attack on the liberties of France, and are eager to take our part in the great drama of crimes which is acting on the continent of Europe. Meantime the violence and injustice of the internal administration keeps pace with our iniquities abroad. Liberty and truth are silenced. An unrelenting system of persecution prevails. The cruel and humiliating sentence passed upon Mr. Muir and Mr. Palmer, men of unblemished morals and of the purest patriotism, the outrages committed on Dr. Priestley, and his intended removal to America, are events which will mark the latter end of the eighteenth century with indelible reproach. But what has liberty to expect from a minister, who has the audacity to assert the King's right to land as many foreign troops as he pleases, without the previous consent of Parliament? If this doctrine be true, the boasted equilibrium of the constitution, all the barriers which the wisdom of our ancestors have opposed to the encroachments of arbitrary power, are idle, ineffectual precautions. For we have only to suppose for a moment, an inclination in the royal breast to overturn our liberties, and of what avail is the nicest internal arrangement against a foreign force? Our constitution, on this principle, is the absurdest sys-

tem that was ever conceived; pretending liberty for its object, yet providing no security against the great antagonist and destroyer of liberty, the employment of military power by the chief magistrate. Let a foreign army be introduced into this or any other country, and quartered upon the subject without his consent, and what is there wanting, if such were the design of the prince to complete the subjection of that country? Will armed foreigners be overawed by written laws or unwritten customs, by the legal limitations of power, the paper lines of demarcation? But Mr. Pitt contends that though the sovereign may land foreign troops at his pleasure, he cannot subsist them without the aid of Parliament. He may overrun his dominions with a mercenary army, it seems, but after he has subdued his subjects, he is compelled to have recourse to them for supplies. What a happy contrivance! Unfortunately, however, it is found that princes with the unlimited command of armies, have hit upon a nearer and more efficacious method of raising supplies than by an act of Parliament. But it is needless any farther to expose the effrontery, or detect the sophistry, of this shameless apostate. The character of Pitt is written in sunbeams. A veteran in frauds while in the bloom of youth, betraying first, and then persecuting, his earliest friends and connexions, falsifying every promise, and violating every political engagement, ever making the fairest professions a prelude to the darkest actions, punishing with the utmost rigour the publisher of the identical paper he himself had circulated,* are traits in the conduct of Pitt which entitle him to a fatal preeminence in guilt. The qualities of this man balance in an extraordinary manner, and sustain each other: the influence of his station, the extent of his enormities, invest him with a kind of splendour, and the contempt we feel for his meanness and duplicity, is lost in the dread of his machinations,

* Mr. Holt, a printer, at Newark, is now imprisoned in Newgate for two years, for reprinting verbatim, An Address to the People on Reform, which was sanctioned for certain, and probably written by the Duke of Richmond and Mr. Pitt.

and the abhorrence of his crimes. Too long has he insulted the patience of his countrymen; nor ought we, when we observe the indifference with which the iniquities of Pitt's administration are viewed, to reproach the Romans for tamely submitting to the tyranny of Caligula or Domitian.

We had fondly hoped a mild philosophy was about to diffuse over the globe, the triumph of liberty and peace. But, alas! these hopes are fled. The continent presents little but one wide picture of desolation, misery, and crimes: *on the earth distress of nations and perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.*

That the seeds of public convulsion are sown in every country of Europe (our own not excepted) it were vain to deny; seeds which without the wisest precautions, and the most conciliating councils, will break out, it is to be feared, in the overthrow of all governments. How this catastrophe may be averted, or how, should that be impossible, its evils may be mitigated and diminished, demands the deepest consideration of every European statesman. The ordinary routine of ministerial chicanery is quite unequal to the task. A philosophic comprehension of mind, which, leaving the beaten road of politics, shall adapt itself to new situations, and profit by the vicissitudes of opinion, equally removed from an attachment to antiquated forms, and useless innovations, capable of rising above the emergency of the moment, to the most remote consequences of a transaction; combining the past, the present, and the future, and knowing how to defend with firmness, or concede with dignity; these are the qualities which the situation of Europe renders indispensable. It would be a mockery of our present ministry to ask whether *they* possess those qualities.

With respect to the following Apology for the Freedom of the Press, the author begs leave to claim the reader's indulgence to its numerous imperfections, and hopes he will recollect, as an excuse for the warmth of his expressions, it is an eulogium on a *dead friend.*

ORIGINAL PREFACE.

The accidental detention of the following pamphlet in the press longer than was expected, gave me an opportunity before it was published, of seeing Bishop Horsley's Sermon, preached before the House of Lords, on the 30th of January, and as its contents are relevant to my subject, a few remarks upon it may not be improper. His Lordship sets out with a severe censure of that *freedom of dispute*, on matters of *such high importance as the origin of government, and the authority of sovereigns*, in which he laments it has been the *folly of this country for several years past* to indulge. If his Lordship has not inquired into those subjects himself, he can with little propriety pretend to decide in so imperious and peremptory a manner; unless it be a privilege of his office to dogmatise without examination, or he has discovered some nearer road to truth than that of reasoning and argument. It seems a favourite point with a certain description of men, to stop the progress of inquiry, and throw mankind back into the darkness of the middle ages, from a persuasion, that ignorance will augment their power, as objects look largest in a mist. There is, in reality, no other foundation for that alarm which the Bishop expresses. Whatever is not comprehended under revelation, falls under the inspection of reason; and since from the whole course of providence, it is evident, that all political events, and all the revolutions of government, are effected by the instrumentality of men, there is no room for supposing them too sacred to be submitted to the human faculties. The more minds there are employed in tracing their principles and effects,

the greater probability will there be of the science of civil policy, as well as every other, attaining to perfection.

Bishop Horsley, determined to preserve the character of an original, presents us with a new set of political principles, and endeavours to place the exploded doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance upon a new foundation. By a curious distinction between the *ground* of authority and of obedience, he rests the former on human compact, the latter on divine obligation. *It is easy to understand*, he says, *that the principle of the private citizen's submission must be quite a distinct thing from the principle of the sovereign's public title. And for this plain reason: The principle of submission, to bind the conscience of every individual, must be something universally known.* He then proceeds to inform us, that the kingly title in England is founded on the act of settlement; but that as thousands and tens of thousands of the people have never heard of that act, the principle which compels their allegiance, must be something distinct from it, with which they may all be acquainted. In this reasoning, he evidently confounds the obligation of an *individual* to submit to the existing authority, with that of the community collectively considered. For *any particular number* of persons to set themselves by force to oppose the established practice of a state, is a plain violation of the laws of morality, as it would be productive of the utmost disorder; and no government could stand, were it permitted to individuals to counteract the general will, of which, in ordinary cases, legal usages are the interpreter. In the worst state of political society, if a people have not sufficient wisdom or courage to correct its evils and assert their liberty, the attempt of individuals to *force* improvements upon them is a presumption which merits the severest punishment. Social order would be inevitably dissolved, if every man declined a practical acquiescence in that political regulation which he did not personally approve. The duty of submission is, in this light, founded on principles which hold under every government, and are plain and obvious. But the principle which attaches a people to their alle-

giance, collectively considered, must exactly coincide with the title to authority; as must be evident from the very meaning of the term authority, which, as distinguished from force, signifies a right to demand obedience. Authority and obedience are correlative terms, and consequently in all respects correspond, and are commensurate with each other.

The divine right, his Lordship says, *of the first magistrate in every polity to the citizen's obedience, is not of that sort which it were high treason to claim for the sovereign of this country. It is a right which in no country can be denied, without the highest of all treasons. The denial of it were treason against the paramount authority of God.* To invest any human power with these high epithets, is ridiculous, at least, if not impious. The right of a prince to the obedience of his subjects, wherever it exists, may be called divine, because we know the Divine Being is the patron of justice and order; but in that sense the authority of a petty constable is equally divine; nor can the term be applied with any greater propriety to supreme than to subordinate magistrates. As to "*submission being among the general rules which proceed from the will of God, and have been impressed upon the conscience of every man by the original constitution of the world*," nothing more is comprehended under this pomp of words, than that submission is, for the most part, a duty—a sublime and interesting discovery! The minds of princes are seldom of the firmest texture; and they who fill their heads with the magnificent chimera of divine right, prepare a victim where they intend a god. Some species of government is essential to the well-being of mankind; submission to some species of government is consequently a duty; but what kind of government shall be appointed, and to what limits submission shall extend, are mere human questions, to be adjusted by mere human reason and contrivance.

As the natural consequence of divine right, his Lordship proceeds to inculcate the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, in the most unqualified terms; assuming it as a principle to be acted upon under govern-

ments the most oppressive, in which he endeavours to shelter himself under the authority of Paul. The apostolic exhortation, as addressed to a few individuals, and adapted to the local circumstances of christians at that period, admits an easy solution; but to imagine it prescribes the duty of the Roman empire, and is intended to subject millions to the capricious tyranny of one man, is a reflection as well on the character of Paul as on christianity itself.

On principles of reason, the only way to determine the agreement of any thing with the will of God, is to consider its influence on the happiness of society; so that, in this view, the question of passive obedience is reduced to a simple issue: Is it best for the human race that every tyrant and usurper be submitted to without check or control? It ought likewise to be remembered, that if the doctrine of passive obedience be true, princes should be taught it, and instructed, that to whatever excesses of cruelty and caprice they proceed, they may expect no resistance on the part of the people. If this maxim appear to be conducive to general good, we may fairly presume it concurs with the will of the Deity; but if it appear pregnant with the most mischievous consequences, it must disclaim such support. From the known perfection of God, we conclude he wills the happiness of mankind; and that though he condescends not to interpose miraculously, that kind of civil polity is most pleasing in his eye, which is productive of the greatest felicity.

On a comparison of free with arbitrary governments, we perceive the former are distinguished from the latter, by imparting a much greater share of happiness to those who live under them; and this in a manner too uniform to be imputed to chance or secret causes. He who wills the end, must will the means which ascertain it. His Lordship endeavours to diminish the dread of despotic government, by observing, that in its worst state it is attended with more good than ill, and that the *end of government, under all its abuses, is generally answered by it.* Admitting this to be true, it is, at best, but a consolation

proper to be applied where there is no remedy, and affords no reason why we should not mitigate political as well as other evils, when it lies in our power. We endeavour to correct the diseases of the eye, or of any other organ, though the malady be not such as renders it useless.

The doctrine of passive obedience is so repugnant to the genuine feelings of human nature, that it can never be completely acted on: a secret dread that popular vengeance will awake, and nature assert her rights, imposes a restraint which the most determined despotism is not able to shake off. The rude reason of the multitude may be perplexed, but the sentiments of the heart are not easily perverted.

In adjusting the different parts of his theory, the learned Bishop appears a good deal embarrassed. *It will be readily admitted*, he says (p. 9), *that of all sovereigns, none reign by so fair and just a title, as those who derive their claim from some such public act (as the act of settlement) of the nation which they govern.* That there are different degrees in *justice*, and even in *divine right* (which his Lordship declares all sovereigns possess,) is a very singular idea. Common minds would be ready to imagine, however various the modes of *injustice* may be, *justice* were a thing absolute and invariable, nor would they conceive how *a divine right, a right the denial of which is high treason against the authority of God*, can be increased by the act of a nation. But this is not all. It is no just inference (he tells us) that the obligation upon the private citizen to submit himself to the authority thus raised, arises wholly from the act of the people conferring it, or from their compact with the person on whom it is conferred. But if the sovereign derives his claim from this act of the nation, how comes it that the obligation of the people to submit to his claim does not spring from the same act? Because *in all these cases*, he affirms, *the act of the people is only the means which Providence employs to advance the new sovereign to his station.* In the hand of the Supreme Being, the whole agency of men may be considered as

an *instrument;* but to make it appear that the right of dominion is independent of the people, men must be shown to be instruments in political affairs, in a more absolute sense than ordinary. A divine interposition of a more immediate kind must be shown, or the mere consideration of God's being the original source of all power, will be a weak reason for absolute submission. Anarchy may have *power* as well as despotism, and is equally a link in the great chain of causes and effects.

It is not a little extraordinary, that Bishop Horsley, the apologist of tyranny, the patron of passive obedience, should affect to admire the British constitution, whose freedom was attained by a palpable violation of the principles for which he contends. He will not say the Barons at Runnemede acted on his maxims, in extorting the Magna Charta from King John, or in demanding its confirmation from Henry the Third. If he approves of their conduct, he gives up his cause, and is compelled, at least, to confess the principles of passive obedience were not true at that time; if he disapproves of their conduct, he must, to be consistent, reprobate the restraints which it imposed on kingly power. The limitations of monarchy, which his Lordship pretends to applaud, were effected by resistance; the freedom of the British constitution flowed from a departure from passive obedience, and was therefore stained with high treason *against the authority of God.* To these conclusions he must inevitably come, unless he can point out something peculiar to the spot of Runnemede, or to the reign of King John, which confines the exception, to the general doctrine of submission, to that particular time and place. With whatever colours the advocates of passive obedience may varnish their theories, they must of necessity be enemies to the British constitution. Its spirit they detest; its corruptions they cherish; and if at present they affect a zeal for its preservation, it is only because they despair of any form of government being erected in its stead, which will give equal permanence to abuses. Afraid to destroy it at once, they take a malignant pleasure in seeing it waste by degrees under the pressure of internal malady.

Whatever bears the semblance of *reasoning*, in Bishop Horsley's discourse, will be found, I trust, to have received a satisfactory answer; but to animadvert with a becoming severity on the temper it displays, is a less easy task. To render him the justice he deserves in that respect, would demand all the fierceness of his character.

We owe him an acknowledgment for the frankness with which he avows his decided preference of the clergy of France to dissenters in England;—a sentiment we have often suspected, but have seldom had the satisfaction of seeing openly professed before.

None, he asserts, *at this season, are more entitled to our offices of love, than those with whom the difference is wide in points of doctrine, discipline, and external rites; those venerable exiles, the prelates and clergy of the fallen church of France.* Far be it from me to intercept the compassion of the humane from the unhappy of any nation, tongue, or people: but the extreme tenderness he professes for the fallen church of France is well contrasted by his malignity towards dissenters. Bishop Horsley is a man of sense; and though doctrine, discipline, and external rites, comprehend the whole of christianity, his tender, sympathetic heart is superior to prejudice, and never fails to recognize in a persecutor, a friend and a brother. Admirable consistency in a Protestant Bishop, to lament over the fall of that antichrist whose overthrow is represented by unerring inspiration, as an event the most splendid and happy! It is a shrewd presumption against the utility of religious establishments, that they too often become seats of intolerance, instigators to persecution, nurseries of Bonners and of Horsleys.

His Lordship closes his invective against dissenters, and Dr. Priestley in particular, by presenting a prayer in the spirit of an indictment. We are happy to hear of his Lordship's prayers, and are obliged to him for remembering us in them; but should be more sanguine in our expectation of benefit, if we were not informed, the prayers of the *righteous* only avail much. *Miserable*

men, he tells us, we *are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.* With respect to the first, we must have plenty of that article, since he has distilled his own; and if the bonds of iniquity are not added, it is only because they are not within the reach of his mighty malice.

It is time to turn from this disgusting picture of sanctimonious hypocrisy and priestly insolence, to address a word to the reader on the following pamphlet. The political sentiments of Dr. Horsley are in truth of too little consequence in themselves to engage a moment's curiosity, and deserve attention only as they indicate the spirit of the times. The freedom with which I have pointed out the abuses of government, will be little relished by the pusillanimous and the interested, but is, I am certain, of that nature, which it is the duty of the people of England never to relinquish, or suffer to be impaired by any human force or contrivance. In the present crisis of things, the danger to liberty is extreme, and it is requisite to address a warning voice to the nation, that may disturb its slumbers, if it cannot heal its lethargy. When we look at the distraction and misery of a neighbouring country, we behold a scene that is enough to make the most hardy republican tremble at the idea of a revolution. Nothing but an obstinate adherence to abuses can ever push the people of England to that fatal extremity. But if the state of things continues to grow worse and worse, if the friends of reform, the true friends of their country, continue to be overwhelmed by calumny and persecution, the confusion will probably be dreadful, the misery extreme, and the calamities that await us too great for human calculation.

What must be the guilt of those men, who can calmly contemplate the approach of anarchy or despotism, and rather choose to behold the ruin of their country, than resign the smallest pittance of private emolument and advantage! To reconcile the disaffected, to remove discontents, to allay animosities, and open a prospect of increasing happiness and freedom, is yet in our power. But if a contrary course be taken, the sun of Great

Britain is set for ever, her glory departed, and her history added to the catalogue of the mighty empires which exhibit the instability of all human grandeur, of empires which, after they rose by virtue to be the admiration of the world, sunk by corruption into obscurity and contempt. If any thing shall then remain of her boasted constitution, it will display magnificence in disorder, majestic desolation, Babylon in ruins, where, in the midst of broken arches and fallen columns, posterity will trace the *monuments* only of our ancient freedom !

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE NEW EDITION.

As the following pamphlet has been long out of print, the reader will naturally expect some reason should be assigned for its republication. I might satisfy myself with safely affirming that I have no alternative left but either to publish it myself, or permit it to be done by others, since the copyright has long since expired; and I have been under the necessity of claiming as a favour what I could not insist upon as a right.

In addition to this, a most erroneous inference has been drawn from my suffering it to fall into neglect. It has been often insinuated, that my political principles have undergone a revolution, and that I have renounced the opinions which it was the object of this pamphlet to establish. I must beg leave, however, to assert, that fashionable as such changes have been, and sanctioned by many conspicuous examples, I am not ambitious of the honour attached to this species of conversion, from a conviction that he who has once been the advocate of freedom and of reform, will find it much easier to change his conduct than his principles—to worship the golden image, than to believe in the divinity of the idol. A reluctance to appear as a political writer, an opinion, whether well or ill founded, that the christian ministry is in danger of losing something of its energy and sanctity, by embarking on the stormy element of political debate, were the motives that determined me, and which, had I not already engaged, would probably have effectually deterred me from writing upon politics. These scruples have given way to feelings still stronger, to my extreme aversion to be classed with political apostates,

and to the suspicion of being deterred from the honest avowal of my sentiments on subjects of great moment, by hopes and fears to which through every period of my life I have been a total stranger. The effect of increasing years has been to augment if possible, my attachment to the principles of civil and religious liberty, and to the cause of reform as inseparably combined with their preservation; and few things would give me more uneasiness than to have it supposed I could ever become hostile or indifferent to these objects.

The alterations in the present edition are nearly all of minor importance; they chiefly consist of slight literary corrections, which very rarely affect the sense. It was not my wish or intention to impair the *identity* of the performance. There is in several parts an acrimony and vehemence in the language, which the candid reader will put to the account of juvenile ardour; and which, should it be deemed excessive, he will perceive could not be corrected, without producing a new composition. One passage in the preface, delineating the character of the late Bishop Horsley, is omitted. On mature reflection, it appeared to the writer not quite consistent either with the spirit of christianity, or with the reverence due to departed genius. For the severity with which he has treated the political character of Mr. Pitt, he is not disposed to apologize, because he feels the fullest conviction that the policy, foreign and domestic, of that celebrated statesman, has inflicted a more incurable wound on the constitution, and entailed more permanent and irreparable calamities on the nation, than that of any other minister in the annals of British history. A simple reflection will be sufficient to evince the unparalleled magnitude of his apostasy, which is, that the memory of the *Son* of Lord Chatham, the vehement opposer of the American War, the champion of Reform, and the idol of the people, has become the rallying point of toryism, the type and symbol of whatever is most illiberal in principle, and intolerant in practice.

1821.

AN APOLOGY.

Section I

On the Right of Public Discussion.

Solon, the celebrated legislator of Athens, we are told, enacted a law for the capital punishment of every citizen who should continue neuter when parties ran high in that republic. He considered, it should seem, the declining to take a decided part on great and critical occasions, an indication of such a culpable indifference to the interests of the commonwealth, as could be expiated only by death. While we blame the rigour of this law, we must confess the principle on which it was founded is just and solid. In a political contest, relating to particular men or measures, a well-wisher to his country may be permitted to remain silent; but when the great interests of a nation are at stake, it becomes every man to act with firmness and vigour. I consider the present as a season of this nature, and shall therefore make no apology for laying before the public the reflections it has suggested.

The most capital advantage an enlightened people can enjoy, is the liberty of discussing every subject which can fall within the compass of the human mind; while this remains, freedom will flourish; but should it be lost or impaired, its principles will neither be well understood nor long retained. To render the magistrate a judge of truth, and engage his authority in the suppression of opinions, shows an inattention to the nature and design of political society. When a nation forms a government, it is not wisdom, but *power* which they place in the hand

of the magistrate; from whence it follows, his concern is only with those objects which *power* can operate upon. On this account the administration of justice, the protection of property, and the defence of every member of the community from violence and outrage, fall naturally within the province of the civil ruler, for these may all be accomplished by *power;* but an attempt to distinguish truth from error, and to countenance one set of opinions to the prejudice of another, is to apply power in a manner mischievous and absurd. To comprehend the reasons on which the right of public discussion is founded, it is requisite to remark the difference between *sentiment* and *conduct*. The *behaviour* of men in society will be influenced by motives drawn from the prospect of good and evil: here then is the proper department of government, as it is capable of applying that good and evil by which actions are determined. Truth, on the contrary, is quite of a different nature, being supported only by *evidence*, and as, when this is represented, we cannot withhold our assent, so where this is wanting, no power or authority can command it.

However some may affect to dread controversy, it can never be of ultimate disadvantage to the interests of truth, or the happiness of mankind. Where it is indulged in its full extent, a multitude of ridiculous opinions will, no doubt, be obtruded upon the public; but any ill influence they may produce cannot continue long, as they are sure to be opposed with at least equal ability, and that superior advantage which is ever attendant on truth. The colours with which wit or eloquence may have adorned a false system will gradually die away, sophistry be detected, and every thing estimated at length according to its true value. Publications, besides, like every thing else that is human, are of a mixed nature, where truth is often blended with falsehood, and important hints suggested in the midst of much impertinent or pernicious matter; nor is there any way of separating the precious from the vile, but by tolerating the whole. Where the right of unlimited inquiry is exerted, the human faculties will be upon the advance; where it

is relinquished they will be of necessity at a stand, and will probably decline.

If we have recourse to experience, that kind of enlarged experience in particular which history furnishes, we shall not be apt to entertain any violent alarm at the greatest liberty of discussion: we shall there see that to this we are indebted for those improvements in arts and sciences, which have meliorated in so great a degree the condition of mankind. The middle ages, as they are called, the darkest period of which we have any particular accounts, were remarkable for two things; the extreme ignorance that prevailed, and an excessive veneration for received opinions; circumstances which, having been always united, operate on each other, it is plain, as cause and effect. The whole compass of science was in those times subject to restraint; every new opinion was looked upon as dangerous. To affirm the globe we inhabit to be round, was deemed heresy, and for asserting its motion, the immortal Galileo was confined in the prisons of the inquisition. Yet, it is remarkable, so little are the human faculties fitted for restraint, that its utmost rigour was never able to effect a thorough unanimity, or to preclude the most alarming discussions and controversies. For no sooner was one point settled than another was started; and as the articles on which men professed to differ were always extremely few and subtle, they came the more easily into contact, and their animosities were the more violent and concentrated. The shape of the tonsure, or manner in which a monk should shave his head, would then throw a whole kingdom into convulsions. In proportion as the world has become more enlightened, this unnatural policy of restraint has retired, the sciences it has entirely abandoned, and has taken its last stand on religion and politics. The first of these was long considered of a nature so peculiarly sacred, that every attempt to alter it, or to impair the reverence for its received institutions, was regarded, under the name of heresy, as a crime of the first magnitude. Yet, dangerous as free inquiry may have been looked upon when extended to the principles

of religion, there is no department where it was more necessary, or its interference more decidedly beneficial. By nobly daring to exert it when all the powers on earth were combined in its suppression, did Luther accomplish that reformation which drew forth primitive christianity, long hidden and concealed under a load of abuses, to the view of an awakened and astonished world. So great is the force of truth when it has once gained the attention, that all the arts and policy of the court of Rome, aided throughout every part of Europe by a veneration for antiquity, the prejudices of the vulgar, and the cruelty of despots, were fairly baffled and confounded by the opposition of a solitary monk. And had this principle of free inquiry been permitted in succeeding times to have full scope, christianity would at this period have been much better understood, and the animosity of sects considerably abated. Religious toleration has never been complete even in England; but having prevailed more here than perhaps in any other country, there is no place where the doctrines of religion have been set in so clear a light, or its truth so ably defended. The writings of deists have contributed much to this end. Whoever will compare the late defences of christianity by Locke, Butler, or Clark, with those of the ancient apologists, will discern in the former far more precision and an abler method of reasoning than in the latter; which must be attributed chiefly to the superior spirit of inquiry by which modern times are distinguished. Whatever alarm then may have been taken at the liberty of discussion, religion, it is plain, hath been a gainer by it; its abuses corrected, and its divine authority settled on a firmer basis than ever.

Though I have taken the liberty of making these preliminary remarks on the influence of free inquiry in general, what I have more immediately in view is, to defend its exercise in relation to government. This being an institution purely human, one would imagine it were the proper province for freedom of discussion in its utmost extent. It is surely just that every one should have a right to examine those measures by

which the happiness of all may be affected. The control of the public mind over the conduct of ministers, exerted through the medium of the press, has been regarded by the best writers, both in our own country and on the continent, as the main support of our liberties. While this remains we cannot be enslaved; when it is impaired or diminished we shall soon cease to be free.

Under pretence of its being seditious to express any disapprobation of the *form* of our government, the most alarming attempts are made to wrest the liberty of the press out of our hands. It is far from being my intention to set up a defence of republican principles, as I am persuaded whatever imperfections may attend the British constitution, it is competent to all the ends of government, and the best adapted of any to the *actual* situation of this kingdom. Yet I am convinced there is no crime in being a republican, and that while he obeys the laws, every man has a right to entertain what sentiments he pleases on our form of government, and to discuss this with the same freedom as any other topic. In proof of this, I shall beg the reader's attention to the following arguments.

1. We may apply to this point in particular, the observation that has been made on the influence of free inquiry in general, that it will issue in the firmer establishment of truth, and the overthrow of error. Every thing that is really excellent will bear examination, it will even invite it, and the more narrowly it is surveyed, to the more advantage it will appear. Is our constitution a good one? it will gain in our esteem by the severest inquiry. Is it bad? then its imperfections should be laid open and exposed. Is it, as is generally confessed, of a mixed nature, excellent in theory, but defective in its practice? freedom of discussion will be still requisite to point out the nature and source of its corruptions, and apply suitable remedies. If our constitution be that perfect model of excellence it is represented, it may boldly appeal to the *reason* of an enlightened age, and need not rest on the support of an implicit faith.

2. Government is the creature of the people, and that which they have created they surely have a right to examine. The great Author of Nature having placed the right of dominion in no particular hands, hath left every point relating to it to be settled by the consent and approbation of mankind. In spite of the attempts of sophistry to conceal the origin of political right, it must inevitably rest at length on the acquiescence of the people. In the case of individuals it is extremely plain. If one man should overwhelm another with superior force, and after completely subduing him, under the name of government, transmit him in this condition to his heirs, every one would exclaim against such an act of injustice. But whether the object of his oppression be one, or a million, can make no difference in its nature, the idea of equity having no relation to that of numbers. Mr. Burke, with some other authors, are aware that an original right of dominion can only be explained by resolving it into the will of the people, yet contend that it becomes inalienable and independent by length of time and prescription. This fatal mistake appears to me to have arisen from confounding the right of dominion with that of private property. Possession for a certain time, it is true, vests in the latter a complete right, or there would be no end to vexatious claims; not to mention that it is of no consequence to society where property lies, provided its regulations be clear, and its possession undisturbed. For the same reason it is of the essence of private property, to be held for the sole use of the owner, with liberty to employ it in what way he pleases, consistent with the safety of the community. But the right of dominion has none of the qualities that distinguish private possession. It is never indifferent to the community in whose hands it is lodged; nor is it intended, in any degree, for the benefit of those who conduct it. Being derived from the will of the people, explicit or implied, and existing solely for their use, it can no more become independent of that will, than water can rise above its source. But if we allow the people are the true origin

of political power, it is absurd to require them to resign the right of discussing any question that can arise either upon its form or its measures, as this would put it for ever out of their power to revoke the trust which they have placed in the hands of their rulers.

3. If it be a crime for a subject of Great Britain to express his disapprobation of that form of government under which he lives, the same conduct must be condemned in the inhabitant of any other country. Perhaps it will be said a distinction ought to be made on account of the superior excellence of the British constitution. This superiority I am not disposed to contest; yet cannot allow it to be a proper reply, as it takes for granted that which is supposed to be a matter of debate and inquiry. Let a government be ever so despotic, it is a chance if those who share in the administration, are not loud in proclaiming its excellence. Go into Turkey, and the Pachas of the provinces will probably tell you, that the Turkish government is the most perfect in the world. If the excellency of a constitution, then, is assigned as the reason that none should be permitted to censure it, who, I ask, is to determine on this its excellence? If you reply, every man's own reason will determine, you concede the very point I am endeavouring to establish, the liberty of free inquiry: if you reply, our rulers, you admit a principle that equally applies to every government in the world, and will lend no more support to the British constitution than to that of Turkey or Algiers.

4. An inquiry respecting the comparative excellence of civil constitutions can be forbidden on no other pretence than that of its tending to sedition and anarchy. This plea, however, will have little weight with those who reflect, to how many ill purposes it has been already applied; and that when the example has been once introduced of suppressing opinions on account of their imagined ill tendency, it has seldom been confined within any safe or reasonable bounds. The doctrine of tendencies is extremely subtle and complicated. What-

ever would diminish our veneration for the christian religion, or shake our belief in the being of a God, will be allowed to be of a very evil tendency; yet few, I imagine, who are acquainted with history, would wish to see the writings of sceptists or deists suppressed by law; being persuaded it would be lodging a very dangerous power in the hands of the magistrate, and that truth is best supported by its own evidence. This dread of certain opinions, on account of their tendency, has been the copious spring of all those religious wars and persecutions which are the disgrace and calamity of modern times.

Whatever danger may result from the freedom of political debate in some countries, no apprehension from that quarter need be entertained in our own. Free inquiry will never endanger the existence of a good government; scarcely will it be able to work the overthrow of a bad one. So uncertain is the issue of all revolutions, so turbulent and bloody the scenes that too often usher them in, the prejudice on the side of an ancient establishment so great, and the interests involved in its support so powerful, that, while it provides in any tolerable measure for the happiness of the people, it may defy all the efforts of its enemies.

The real danger to every free government is less from its enemies than from itself. Should it resist the most temperate reforms, and maintain its abuses with obstinacy, imputing complaint to faction, calumniating its friends, and smiling only on its flatterers; should it encourage informers, and hold out rewards to treachery, turning every man into a spy, and every neighbourhood into the seat of an inquisition, let it not hope it can long conceal its tyranny under the mask of freedom. These are the avenues through which despotism must enter; these are the arts at which integrity sickens, and freedom turns pale.

Section II.

On Associations.

The associations that have been formed in various parts of the kingdom, appear to me to have trodden very nearly in the steps I have been describing. Nothing could have justified this extraordinary mode of combination, but the actual existence of those insurrections and plots, of which no traces have appeared, except in a speech from the throne. They merit a patent for insurrections who have discovered the art of conducting them with so much silence and secrecy, that in the very places where they are affirmed to have happened, they have been heard of only by rebound from the cabinet. Happy had it been for the repose of unoffending multitudes, if the Associators had been able to put their mobs in possession of this important discovery before they set them in motion.

No sooner had the ministry spread an alarm through the kingdom against republicans and levellers, than an assembly of court-sycophants, with a placeman at their head, entered into what they termed an association, at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, whence they issued accounts of their proceedings. This was the primitive, the metropolitan association, which, with few exceptions, gave the tone to the succeeding, who did little more than copy its language and its spirit. As the popular ferment has, it may be hoped, by this time in some measure subsided, it may not be improper to endeavour to estimate the utility, and develope the principles of these societies.

1. The first particular that engages the attention, is their *singular* and *unprecedented* nature. The object is altogether new. The political societies that have been hitherto formed, never thought of interfering with the operations of law, but were content with giving, by their union, greater force and publicity to their sentiments. The diffusion of principles was their object, not the suppression; and confiding in the justness of their cause,

they challenged their enemies into the field of controversy. These societies, on the other hand, are combined with an express view to extinguish opinions, and to overwhelm freedom of inquiry by the terrors of criminal prosecution. They pretend not to enlighten the people by the spread of political knowledge, or to confute the errors of the system they wish to discountenance: they breathe only the language of menace: their element is indictment and prosecution, and their criminal justice formed on the model of Rhadamanthus, the poetic judge of Hell.

Castigatque, auditque, dolos subigitque fateri.

2. They are not only new in their nature and complexion, but are unsupported by any just pretence of expedience or necessity. The British constitution hath provided ample securities for its stability and permanence. The prerogatives of the crown, in all matters touching its dignity, are of a nature so high and weighty as may rather occasion alarm than need corroboration. The office of Attorney General is created for the very purpose of prosecuting sedition; and he has the peculiar privilege of filing a bill against offenders, in the King's name, without the intervention of a grand jury. If the public tranquillity be threatened, the King can embody the militia as well as station the military in the suspected places; and when to this is added the immense patronage and influence which flows from the disposal of seventeen millions a year, it must be evident, the stability of the British government can never be shaken by the efforts of any minority whatever. It comprehends within itself all the resources of defence, which the best civil polity ought to possess. The permanence of every government must depend, however, after all, upon opinion, a general persuasion of its excellence, which can never be increased by its assuming a vindictive and sanguinary aspect. While it is the object of the people's approbation it will be continued, and to support it much beyond that period, by mere force and terror, would be impossible were it just, and unjust were it possible. The

law hath amply provided against *overt acts* of sedition and disorder, and to suppress *mere opinions* by any other method than reason and argument, is the height of tyranny. Freedom of thought being intimately connected with the happiness and dignity of man in every stage of his being, is of so much more importance than the preservation of any constitution, that to infringe the former, under pretence of supporting the latter, is to sacrifice the means to the end.

3. In attempting to define the boundary which separates the liberty of the press from its licentiousness, these societies have undertaken a task which they are utterly unable to execute. The line that divides them is too nice and delicate to be perceived by every eye, or to be drawn by every rude and unskilful hand. When a public outrage against the laws is committed, the crime is felt in a moment; but to ascertain the qualities which compose a libel, and to apply with exactness the general idea to every instance and example which may occur, demand an effort of thought and reflection, little likely to be exerted by the great mass of mankind. Bewildered in a pursuit which they are incapable of conducting with propriety, taught to suspect treason and sedition in every page they read, and in every conversation they hear, the necessary effect of such an employment must be to perplex the understanding and degrade the heart. An admirable expedient for transforming a great and generous people into a contemptible race of spies and informers!

For private individuals to combine together at all with a view to quicken the vigour of criminal prosecution is suspicious at least, if not illegal; in a case where the liberty of the press is concerned, all such combinations are utterly improper. The faults and the excellencies of a book are often so blended, the motives of a writer so difficult to ascertain, and the mischiefs of servile restraint so alarming, that the criminality of a book should always be left to be determined by the particular circumstances of the case. As one would rather see many criminals escape, than the punishment of one innocent person, so

it is infinitely better a multitude of errors should be propagated than one truth be suppressed.

If the suppression of Mr. Paine's pamphlet be the object of these societies, they are ridiculous in the extreme; for the circulation of his works ceased the moment they were declared a libel; if any other publication be intended, they are premature and impertinent, in presuming to anticipate the decision of the courts.

4. Admitting, however, the principle on which they are founded to be ever so just and proper, they are highly impolitic. All violence exerted toward opinions which falls short of *extermination*, serves no other purpose than to render them more known, and ultimately to increase the zeal and number of their abettors. Opinions that are false may be dissipated by the force of argument: when they are true, their punishment draws towards them infallibly more of the public attention, and enables them to dwell with more lasting weight and pressure on the mind. The progress of reason is aided, in this case, by the passions, and finds in curiosity, compassion and resentment, powerful auxiliaries.

When public discontents are allowed to vent themselves in reasoning and discourse, they subside into a calm; but their confinement in the bosom is apt to give them a fierce and deadly tincture. The reason of this is obvious: as men are seldom disposed to complain till they at least imagine themselves injured, so there is no injury which they will remember so long, or resent so deeply, as that of being threatened into silence. This seems like adding triumph to oppression, and insult to injury. The apparent tranquillity which may ensue, is delusive and ominous; it is that awful stillness which nature feels, while she is awaiting the discharge of the gathered tempest.

The professed object of these associations is to strengthen the hands of government: but there is one way in which it may strengthen its own hands most effectually; recommended by a very venerable authority, though one from which it hath taken but few lessons. "He that hath *clean hands*," saith a sage adviser, "shall

grow stronger and stronger." If the government wishes to become more vigorous, let it first become more pure, lest an addition to its strength should only increase its capacity for mischief.

There is a characteristic feature attending these associations, which is sufficient to acquaint us with their real origin and spirit, that is the silence, almost total, which they maintain respecting political abuses. Had they been intended, as their title imports, merely to furnish an antidote to the spread of republican schemes and doctrines, they would have loudly asserted the necessity of reform, as a conciliatory principle, a centre of union, in which the virtuous of all descriptions might have concurred. But this, however conducive to the good of the people, would have defeated their whole project, which consisted in availing themselves of an alarm which they had artfully prepared, in order to withdraw the public attention from real grievances to imaginary dangers. The Hercules of reform had penetrated the Augean stable of abuses; the fabric of corruption, hitherto deemed sacred, began to totter, and its upholders were apprehensive their iniquity was almost full. In this perplexity they embraced an occasion afforded them by the spread of certain bold speculations—(speculations which owed their success to the corruptions of government) to diffuse a panic, and to drown the justest complaints in unmeaning clamour. The plan of associating, thus commencing in corruption, and propagated by imitation and by fear, had for its *pretext* the fear of republicanism; for its *object* the perpetuity of abuses. Associations in this light may be considered as mirrors placed to advantage for reflecting the finesses and tricks of the ministry. At present they are playing into each other's hands, and no doubt find great entertainment in deceiving the nation. But let them beware lest it should be found, after all, none are so much duped as themselves. Wisdom and truth, the offspring of the sky, are immortal; but cunning and deception, the meteors of the earth, after glittering for a moment, must pass away.

The candour and sincerity of these associators is of a

piece with their other virtues; for while they profess to be combined in order to prevent riots and insurrections, attempted to be raised by republicans and levellers, they can neither point out the persons to whom that description applies, nor mention a single riot that was not fomented by their principles, and engaged on their side. There have been three riots in England of late on a political account; one at Birmingham, one at Manchester, and one at Cambridge; each of which has been levelled against dissenters and friends of reform.*

The Crown and Anchor association, as it was first in order of time, seems also determined, by pushing to a greater length the maxims of arbitrary power, to maintain its pre-eminence in every other respect. The divine right of monarchy, the sacred anointing of kings, passive obedience and non-resistance, are the hemlock and nightshade which these physicians have prescribed for the health of the nation; and are yet but a specimen of a more fertile crop which they have promised out of the hot-bed of depravity. The opinions which they have associated to suppress, are contained, they tell us, in the terms liberty and equality; after which they proceed to a dull harangue on the mischiefs that must flow from equalizing property. All mankind, they gravely tell us, are not equal in virtue, as if that were not sufficiently evident from the existence of their society. The notion of equality in property, was never seriously cherished in the mind of any man, unless for the purpose of calumny: and the *term* transplanted from a neighbouring country, never intended *there* any thing

* The conduct of an honourable member of the House of Commons, respecting the last of these, was extremely illiberal. He informed the house, that the riot at Cambridge was nothing more than that the mob compelled Mr. Musgrave, one of his constituents, who had been heard to speak seditious words, to sing God save the King—a statement in which he was utterly mistaken. Mr. Musgrave, with whom I have the pleasure of being well acquainted, was neither guilty of uttering seditious discourse, nor did he, I am certain, comply with the requisition. His whole crime consists in the love of his country, and a zeal for parliamentary reform. It would be happy for this nation, if a portion only, of the integrity and disinterested virtue which adorn his character, could be infused into our great men.

more than *equality of rights*—as opposed to feudal oppression and hereditary distinctions. An equality of rights may consist with the greatest inequality between the things to which those rights extend. It belongs to the very nature of *property*, for the owner to have a full and complete right to that which he possesses, and consequently for all properties to have *equal* rights; but who is so ridiculous as to infer from thence, that the *possessions* themselves are equal? A more alarming idea cannot be spread among the people, than that there is a large party ready to abet them in any enterprise of depredation and plunder. As all men do not know that the element of the associators is calumny, they are really in danger for a while of being believed, and must thank themselves if they should realize the plan of equality their own malice has invented.

I am happy to find that Mr. Law, a very respectable gentleman, who had joined the Crown and Anchor society, has publicly withdrawn his name, disgusted with their conduct; by whom we are informed they receive anonymous letters, villifying the characters of persons of the first eminence, and that they are in avowed alliance with the ministry for prosecutions, whom they intreat to order the *Solicitor-General to proceed on their suggestions.* When such a society declares *itself to be unconnected with any political party*, our respect for human nature impels us to believe it, and to hope their appearance may be considered as an era in the annals of corruption, which will transmit their names to posterity with the encomiums they deserve. With sycophants so base and venal, no argument or remonstrance can be expected to have any success. It is in vain to apply to reason when it is perverted and abused, to shame when it is extinguished, to a conscience which has ceased to admonish: I shall therefore leave them in the undisturbed possession of that true philosophical indifference which steels them against the reproaches of their own hearts, and the contempt of all honest men.

All the associations, it is true, do not breathe the spirit which disgraces that of the Crown and Anchor.

But they all concur in establishing a political test, on the first appearance of which the friends of liberty should make a stand. The opinions proposed may be innocent, but the precedent is fatal; and the moment subscription becomes the price of security, the Rubicon is passed. Emboldened by the success of this expedient, its authors will venture on more vigorous measures: test will steal upon test, and the bounds of tolerated opinion will be continually narrowed, till we awake under the fangs of a relentless despotism.

Section III.

On a Reform of Parliament.

Whatever difference of opinion may take place in points of less importance, there is one in which the friends of freedom are entirely agreed, that is, the necessity of reform in the representation. The theory of the English constitution presents three independent powers; the King as executive head, with a negative in the legislature; an hereditary House of Peers; and an assembly of Commons, who are appointed to represent the nation at large. From this enumeration it is plain, that the people of England can have no liberty, that is, no share in forming the laws, but what they exert through the medium of the last of those bodies; nor then, but in proportion to its independence of the other. The independence therefore of the House of Commons, is the column on which the whole fabric of our liberty rests. Representation may be considered as complete when it collects to a sufficient extent, and transmits with perfect fidelity the real sentiments of the people; but this it may fail of accomplishing through various causes. If its electors are but a handful of people, and of a peculiar order and description; if its duration is sufficient to enable it to imbibe the spirit of a corporation; if its integrity be corrupted by treasury influence,

or warped by the prospect of places and pensions; it may, by these means, not only fail of the end of its appointment, but fall into such an entire dependence on the executive branch, as to become a most dangerous instrument of arbitrary power. The usurpation of the emperors at Rome would not have been safe, unless it had concealed itself behind the formalities of a senate.

The confused and inadequate state of our representation, at present, is too obvious to escape the attention of the most careless observer. While, through the fluctuation of human affairs, many towns of ancient note have fallen into decay, and the increase of commerce has raised obscure hamlets to splendour and distinction, the state of representation standing still amidst these vast changes, points back to an order of things which no longer subsists. The opulent towns of Birmingham, Manchester, and Leeds, send no members to parliament; the decayed boroughs of Cornwall appoint a multitude of representatives. Old Sarum sends two members, though there are not more than one or two families that reside in it. The disproportion between those who vote for representatives and the people at large is so great, that the majority of our House of Commons is chosen by less than eight thousand, in a kingdom consisting of as many millions. Mr. Burgh, in his excellent political disquisitions, has made a very laborious calculation on this head, from which it appears, that the affairs of this great empire are decided by the suffrages of between five and six thousand electors; so that our representation, instead of being co-extended with the people, fails of this in a proportion that is truly enormous. The qualifications, moreover, that confer the right of election, are capricious and irregular. In some places it belongs to the corporation, or to those whom they think proper to make free; in some to every housekeeper; in others it is attached to a particular estate, whose proprietor is absolute lord of the borough, of which he makes his advantage, by representing it himself, or disposing of it to the best bidder. In counties the right of election is annexed only to one kind of property, that of freehold; the proprietor of

copyhold land being entirely deprived of it, though his political situation is precisely the same.*

The consequence of this perplexity in the qualifications of electors is often a tedious scrutiny and examination before a committee of the House of Commons, prolonged to such a length, that there is no time when there are not some boroughs entirely unrepresented. These gross defects in our representation have struck all sensible men very forcibly; even Dr. Paley, a courtly writer in the main, declares, the bulk of the inhabitants of this country have little more concern in the appointment of parliament, than the subjects of the Grand Seignior at Constantinople.

On the propriety of the several plans which have been proposed to remedy these evils, it is not for me to decide; I shall choose rather to point out two general principles which ought, in my opinion, to pervade every plan of parliamentary reform; the first of which respects the mode of election, the second the independence of the elected. In order to give the people a true representation, let its basis be enlarged, and the duration of parliaments shortened. The first of these improvements would diminish bribery and corruption, lessen the violence and tumult of elections, and secure to the people a real and unequivocal organ for the expression of their sentiments.

Were every householder in town and country permitted to vote, the number of electors would be so great, that as no art or industry would be able to bias their minds, so no sums of money would be sufficient to win their suffrages. The plan which the Duke of Richmond recommended was, if I mistake not, still more comprehensive, including all that were of age, except menial servants. By this means, the different passions and prejudices of men would check each other, the predomi-

* Many of these extraordinary anomalies, so long acknowledged, and their baneful effects so often lamented, are corrected and removed by the "Reform Bill," which, with the King's concurrence, was brought into parliament under the administration of Earl Grey, and received the Royal assent June 7th, 1832.—Ed.

nance of any particular or local interest be kept down, and from the whole there would result that *general impression*, which would convey with precision the unbiassed sense of the people.

But besides this, another great improvement, in my opinion, would be, to shorten the duration of parliament, by bringing it back to one year. The *Michel Gemote*, or great council of the kingdom, was appointed to meet under Alfred twice a year, and by divers ancient statutes after the Conquest, the king was bound to summon a parliament every year, or oftener, if need be; when, to remedy the looseness of this latter phrase, by the 16th of Charles the Second it was enacted, the holding of parliaments should not be intermitted above three years at most; and in the first of King William, it is declared as one of the rights of the people, that for redress of all grievances, and preserving the laws, parliaments ought to be held frequently; which was again reduced to a certainty by another statute, which enacts, that a new parliament shall be called within three years after the termination of the former. To this term did they continue limited till the reign of George the First; when, after the rebellion of 1715, the septennial act was passed, under the pretence of diminishing the expense of elections, and preserving the kingdom against the designs of the Pretender. A noble Lord* observed, on that occasion, he was at an utter loss to describe the nature of this prolonged parliament, unless he were allowed to borrow a phrase from the Athanasian Creed; for it was "neither created, nor begotten, but proceeding." Without disputing the upright intentions of the authors of this act, it is plain, they might on the same principle have voted themselves perpetual, and their conduct will ever remain a monument of that short-sightedness in politics, which, in providing for the pressure of the moment, puts to hazard the liberty and happiness of future times. It is intolerable, that in so large a space of a man's life as seven years, he should never be able to

* The Earl of Peterborough.

correct the error he may have committed in the choice of a representative, but be compelled to see him every year dipping deeper into corruption; a helpless spectator of the contempt of his interests, and the ruin of his country. During the present period of parliaments a nation may sustain the greatest possible changes; may descend by a succession of ill counsels, from the highest pinnacle of its fortunes to the lowest point of depression; its treasure exhausted, its credit sunk, and its weight almost completely annihilated in the scale of empire. Ruin and felicity are seldom dispensed by the same hand, nor is it likely any succour in calamity should flow from the wisdom and virtue of those, by whose folly and wickedness it was inflicted.

The union between a representative and his constituents ought to be strict and entire; but the septennial act has rendered it little more than nominal. The duration of parliament sets its members at a distance from the people, begets a notion of independence, and gives the minister so much leisure to insinuate himself into their graces, that before the period is expired, they become very mild and complying. Sir Robert Walpole used to say, that "every man had his price;" a maxim on which he relied with so much security, that he declared he seldom troubled himself with the election of members, but rather chose to stay and buy them up when they came to market. A very interesting work, lately published, entitled, "Anecdotes of Lord Chatham," unfolds some parts of this mystery of iniquity, which the reader will probably think equally new and surprising. There is a regular office, it seems, that of manager of the House of Commons, which generally devolves on one of the secretaries of state, and consists in securing, at all events, a majority in parliament by a judicious application of promises and bribes. The sums disbursed by this honourable office are involved under the head of Secret Service Money; and so delicate is this employment of manager of the House of Commons considered, that we have an account in the above-mentioned treatise, of a new arrangement of ministry, which failed for no other

reason than that the different parties could not agree on the proper person to fill it.*

This secret influence which prevails, must be allowed to be extremely disgraceful; nor can it ever be effectually remedied, but by contracting the duration of parliaments.

If it be objected to annual parliaments, that by this means the tumult and riot attendant on elections will be oftener repeated; it ought to be remembered, that their duration is the chief source of these disorders. Render a seat in the House of Commons of less value, and you diminish at once the violence of the struggle. In America, the election of representatives takes place throughout that vast continent, in one day, with the greatest tranquillity.

In a mixed constitution like ours, it is impossible to estimate the importance of an independent parliament; for as it is here our freedom consists, if this barrier to the encroachments of arbitrary power once fails, we can oppose no other. Should the king attempt to govern without a parliament, or should the upper house pretend to legislate independently of the lower, we should immediately take the alarm; but, if the House of Commons falls insensibly under the control of the other two branches of the legislature, our danger is greater, because our apprehensions are less. The forms of a free constitution surviving, when its spirit is extinct, would perpetuate slavery by rendering it more concealed and secure. On this account, I apprehend, did Montesquieu predict

* As I have taken my information on this head entirely on the authority of the work called "Anecdotes of Lord Chatham," the reader may not be displeased with the following extract, from vol. ii. page 121. "The management of the House of Commons, as it is called, is a confidential department unknown to the constitution. In the public accounts it is immersed under the head of secret service money. It is usually given to the secretary of state when that post is filled by a commoner. The business of the department, is to distribute with *art* and *policy* amongst the members who have no ostensible places, sums of money, for their support during the session; besides contracts, lottery tickets, and other douceurs. It is no uncommon circumstance, at the end of a session, for a gentleman to receive five hundred or a thousand pounds for *his services*."

the loss of our freedom, from the legislative power becoming more corrupt than the executive; a crisis to which, if it has not arrived already, it is hastening apace. The immortal Locke, far from looking with the indifference too common on the abuses in our representation, considered all improper influence exerted in that quarter as threatening the very dissolution of government. *Thus*, says he, *to regulate candidates and electors, and new model the ways of election, what is it but to cut up the government by the roots, and poison the very fountain of public security?*

No enormity can subsist long without meeting with advocates; on which account we need not wonder, that the corruption of parliament has been justified under the mild denomination of influence, though it must pain every virtuous mind to see the enlightened Paley engaged in its defence. If a member votes consistently with his convictions, his conduct, in that instance, has not been determined by influence; but if he votes otherwise, give it what gentle name you please, he forfeits his integrity; nor is it possible to mark the boundaries which should limit his compliance; for if he may deviate a little, to attain the See of Winchester, he may certainly step a little farther, to reach the dignity of a Primate. How familiar must the practice of corruption have become, when a philosophical moralist, a minister of religion, of great talents and virtue, in the calm retirement of his study, does not hesitate to become its public apologist?

The necessity of a reform in the constitution of parliament, is in nothing more obvious than in the ascendancy of the aristocracy. This colossus bestrides both houses of parliament; legislates in one, and exerts a domineering influence over the other. It is humiliating. at the approach of an election, to see a whole county send a deputation to an Earl or Duke, and beg a representative as you would beg an alms. A multitude of laws have been framed, it is true, to prevent all interference of peers in elections; but they neither are nor can be effectual, while the House of Commons opens its

doors to their sons and brothers. If our liberty depends on the balance and control of the respective orders in the state, it must be extremely absurd to blend them together, by placing the father in one department of the legislature, and his family in the other.

Freedom is supposed, by some, to derive great security from the existence of a regular opposition; an expedient which is, in my opinion, both the offspring and the cherisher of faction. That a minister should be opposed, when his measures are destructive to his country, can admit of no doubt; that a systematic opposition should be maintained against any man, merely as a minister, without regard to the principles he may profess, or the measures he may propose, which is intended by a regular opposition, appears to me a most corrupt and unprincipled maxim. When a legislative assembly is thus thrown into parties, distinguished by no leading principle, however warm and animated their debates, it is plain they display only a struggle for the emoluments of office. This the people discern, and in consequence, listen with very little attention to the representations of the minister on the one hand, or the minority on the other; being persuaded the only real difference between them is, that the one is anxious to gain what the other is anxious to keep. If a measure be good, it is of no importance to the nation from whom it proceeds; yet will it be esteemed by the opposition a point of honour not to let it pass, without throwing every obstruction in its way. If we listen to the minister for the time being, the nation is always flourishing and happy; if we hearken to the opposition, it is a chance if it be not on the brink of destruction. In an assembly convened to deliberate on the affairs of a nation, how disgusting to hear the members perpetually talk of their connexions, and their resolution to act with a particular set of men, when, if they have happened by chance to vote according to their convictions rather than their party, half their speeches are made up of apologies for a conduct so new and unexpected! When they see men united who agree in nothing but their hostility to the minister, the people fall

at first into amazement and irresolution; till perceiving political debate is a mere scramble for profit and power, they endeavour to become as corrupt as their betters. It is not in that roar of faction which deafens the ear and sickens the heart, the still voice of Liberty is heard. She turns from the disgusting scene, and regards these struggles as the pangs and convulsions in which she is doomed to expire.

The æra of parties, flowing from the animation of freedom, is ever followed by an æra of faction, which marks its feebleness and decay. Parties are founded on *principle*, factions on *men;* under the first, the people are contending respecting the system that shall be pursued; under the second, they are candidates for servitude, and are only debating *whose livery* they shall wear. The purest times of the Roman republic were distinguished by violent dissensions; but they consisted in the jealousy of the several *orders* of the state among each other; on the ascendance of the patricians on the one side, and the plebeians on the other; a useful struggle, which maintained the balance and equipoise of the constitution. In the progress of corruption things took a turn; the permanent parties which sprang from the fixed principles of government were lost, and the citizens arranged themselves under the standard of particular leaders, being bandied into factions, under Marius or Sylla, Cæsar or Pompey; while the republic stood by without any interest in the dispute, a passive and helpless victim. The crisis of the fall of freedom, in different nations, with respect to the causes that produce it, is extremely uniform. After the manner of the ancient factions, we hear much in England of the Bedford party; the Rockingham party; the Portland party; when it would puzzle the wisest man to point out their political distinction. The useful jealousy of the separate orders is extinct, being all melted down and blended into one mass of corruption. The House of Commons looks with no jealousy on the House of Lords, nor the House of Lords on the House of Commons; the struggle in both is maintained by the ambition of powerful individuals

and families, between whom the kingdom is thrown as the prize, and the moment they unite, they perpetuate its subjection and divide its spoils.

From a late instance, we see they quarrel only about the partition of the prey, but are unanimous in defending it. To the honour of Mr. Fox, and the band of illustrious patriots of which he is the leader, it will however be remembered, that they stood firm against a host of opponents, when, assailed by every species of calumny and invective, they had nothing to expect but the reproaches of the present, and the admiration of all future times. If any thing can rekindle the sparks of Freedom, it will be the flame of their eloquence; if any thing can reanimate her faded form, it will be the vigour of such minds.

The disordered state of our representation, it is acknowledged on all hands, must be remedied, some time or other; but it is contended, that it would be improper at present, on account of the political ferment that occupies the minds of men, and the progress of republican principles; a plausible objection, if delay can restore public tranquillity; but unless I am greatly mistaken, it will have just a contrary effect. It is hard to conceive, how the discontent that flows from the abuses of government can be allayed by their being perpetuated. If they are of such a nature that they can neither be palliated or denied, and are made the ground of invective against the whole of our constitution, are not they its best friends who wish to cut off this occasion of scandal and complaint? The *theory* of our constitution, we say, and justly, has been the admiration of the world; the cavils of its enemies, then, derive their force entirely from the disagreement between that theory and its practice; nothing therefore remains, but to bring them as near as human affairs will admit to a perfect correspondence. This will cut up faction by the roots, and immediately distinguish those who wish to reform the constitution, from those who wish its subversion. Since the abuses are real, the longer they are continued the more they will be known; the discontented will

be always gaining ground, and, though repulsed, will return to the charge with redoubled vigour and advantage. Let reform be considered as a chirurgical operation, if you please; but since the constitution must undergo it or die, it is best to submit before the remedy becomes as dangerous as the disease. The example drawn from a neighbouring kingdom, as an argument for delay, ought to teach us a contrary lesson. Had the encroachments of arbitrary power been steadily resisted, and remedies been applied as evils appeared, instead of piling them up as precedents, the disorders of government could never have arisen to that enormous height, nor would the people have been impelled to the dire necessity of building the whole fabric of political society afresh. It seems an infatuation in governments, that in tranquil times they treat the people with contempt, and turn a deaf ear to their complaints; till, public resentment kindling, they find, when it is too late, that, in their eagerness to retain every thing, they have lost all.

The pretences of Mr. Pitt and his friends for delaying this great business are so utterly inconsistent, that it is too plain they are averse in reality to its ever taking place. When Mr. Pitt is reminded that he himself, at the beginning of his ministry, recommended parliamentary reform, he replies, it was necessary then, on account of the calamitous state of the nation, just emerged from an unsuccessful war, and filled with gloom and disquiet. But, unless the people are libelled, they now are still more discontented; with this difference, that their uneasiness formerly arose from events but remotely connected with unequal representation; but that this is now the chief ground of complaint. It is absurd, however, to rest the propriety of reform on any turn of public affairs. If it be not requisite to secure our freedom, it is vain and useless; but if it be a proper means of preserving that blessing, the nation will need it as much in peace as in war. When we wish to retain those habits which we know it were best to relinquish, we are extremely ready to be soothed with momentary pretences for delay, though they appear, on reflection, to be drawn

from quite opposite topics, and therefore to be equally applicable to all times and seasons.

A similar delusion is practised in the conduct of public affairs. If the people be tranquil and composed, and have not caught the passion of reform, it is impolitic, say the ministry, to disturb their minds, by agitating a question that lies at rest: if they are awakened, and touched with a conviction of the abuse, we must wait, say they, till the ferment subsides, and not lessen our dignity by seeming to yield to popular clamour: if we are at peace, and commerce flourishes, it is concluded we cannot need any improvement, in circumstances so prosperous and happy: if, on the other hand, we are at war, and our affairs unfortunate, an amendment in the representation is dreaded, as it would seem an acknowledgment that our calamities flowed from the ill conduct of parliament. Now, as the nation must always be in one or other of these situations, the conclusion is, the period of reform can never arrive at all.

This pretence for delay will appear the more extraordinary in the British ministry, from a comparison of the exploits they have performed with the task they decline. They have found time for involving us in millions of debt; for cementing a system of corruption that reaches from the cabinet to the cottage; for carrying havoc and devastation to the remotest extremities of the globe; for accumulating taxes which famish the peasant and reward the parasite; for bandying the whole kingdom into factions, to the ruin of all virtue and public spirit; for the completion of these achievements they have suffered no opportunity to escape them. Elementary treatises on time mention various arrangements and divisions, but none have ever touched on the chronology of statesmen. These are a generation who measure their time not so much by the revolutions of the sun, as by the revolutions of power. There are two æras particularly marked in their calendar; the one the period they are in the ministry, and the other when they are out; which have a very different effect on their sentiments and reasoning. Their course commences in the character of friends to

the people, whose grievances they display in all the colours of variegated diction. But, the moment they step over the threshold of St. James's, they behold every thing in a new light; the taxes seem lessened, the people rise from their depression, the nation flourishes in peace and plenty, and every attempt at improvement is like heightening the beauties of paradise, or mending the air of elysium.

Section IV.

On Theories, and the Rights of Man.

Among the many alarming symptoms of the present time, it is not the least, that there is a prevailing disposition to hold in contempt the *Theory* of liberty as false and visionary. For my own part, it is my determination never to be deterred by an obnoxious name from an open avowal of any principles that appear useful and important. Were the ridicule now cast on the Rights of Man confined to a mere phrase, as the title of a book, it were of little consequence; but when *that* is made the pretence for deriding the doctrine itself, it is a matter of serious alarm.

To place the rights of man as the basis of lawful government, is not peculiar to Mr. Paine; but was done more than a century ago by men of no less eminence than Sidney and Locke. It is therefore extremely disingenuous to impute the system to Mr. Paine as its author. His structure may be false and erroneous, but the foundation was laid by other hands. That there are *natural rights*, or in other words, a certain liberty which men may exercise, independent of permission from society, can scarcely be doubted by those who comprehend the meaning of the terms. Every man must have a natural right to use his limbs in what manner he pleases, that is not injurious to another. In like manner he must have a right to worship God after the mode he thinks acceptable; or in other words, he ought not to be

compelled to consult any thing but his own conscience. These are a specimen of those rights which may properly be termed *natural;* for, as philosophers speak of the primary qualities of matter, they cannot be increased or diminished. We cannot conceive the right of using our limbs to be created by society, or to be rendered more complete by any human agreement or compact.

But, there still remains a question, whether this natural liberty must not be considered as entirely relinquished, when we become members of society. It is pretended, that the moment we quit a state of *nature*, as we have given up the control of our actions, in return for the superior advantages of law and government; we can never appeal again to any original principles, but must rest content with the advantages that are secured by the terms of the society. These are the views which distinguish the political writings of Mr. Burke, an author whose splendid and unequalled powers have given a vogue and fashion to certain tenets, which from any other pen would have appeared abject and contemptible. In the field of reason the encounter would not be difficult, but who can withstand the fascination and magic of his eloquence? The excursions of his genius are immense. His imperial fancy has laid all nature under tribute, and has collected riches from every scene of the creation and every walk of art. His eulogium on the Queen of France is a masterpiece of pathetic composition; so select are its images, so fraught with tenderness, and so rich with colours "dipt in heaven," that he who can read it without rapture may have merit as a reasoner, but must resign all pretensions to taste and sensibility. His imagination is, in truth, only too prolific: a world of itself, where he dwells in the midst of chimerical alarms, is the dupe of his own enchantments, and starts, like Prospero, at the spectres of his own creation.

His intellectual views in general, however, are wide and variegated, rather than distinct; and the light he has let in on the British constitution in particular, resembles the coloured effulgence of a painted medium, a kind

of mimic twilight, solemn and soothing to the senses, but better fitted for ornament than use.

A book has lately been published, under the title of "Happiness and Rights," written by Mr. Hey, a respectable member of the University of Cambridge, whose professed object is, with Mr. Burke, to overturn the doctrine of natural rights. The few remarks I may make upon it are less on account of any merit in the work itself, than on account of its author, who, being a member of considerable standing in the most liberal of our universities, may be presumed to speak the sentiments of that learned body. The chief difference between his theory and Mr. Burke's, seems to be the denial of the existence of any rights that can be denominated natural, which Mr. Burke only supposes *resigned* on the formation of political society. *The rights*, says Mr. Hey, *I can conjecture (for it is but a conjecture) to belong to me as a mere man, are so uncertain, and comparatively so unimportant, while the rights I feel myself possessed of in civil society are so great, so numerous, and many of them so well defined, that I am strongly inclined to consider society as creating or giving my rights, rather than recognizing and securing what I could have claimed if I had lived in an unconnected state.* (p. 137.)

As government implies restraint, it is plain a portion of our freedom is given up by entering into it; the only question can then be, how far this resignation extends, whether to a part, or to the whole? This point may, perhaps, be determined by the following reflections:—

1. The advantages that civil power can procure to a community, are *partial*. A small part, in comparison of the condition of man, can fall within its influence. Allowing it to be a rational institution, it must have that end in view which a reasonable man would propose by appointing it; nor can it imply any greater sacrifice than is strictly necessary to its attainment. But on what account is it requisite to unite in political society? Plainly to guard against the injury of others; for, were there no injustice among mankind, no protection would be needed; no *public force* necessary; every man might be left with-

out restraint or control. The attainment of all possible good, then, is *not* the purpose of laws, but to secure us from external injury and violence; and as the means must be proportioned to the end, it is absurd to suppose that, by submitting to civil power, with a view to some *particular* benefits, we should be understood to hold all our advantages dependent upon that authority. Civil restraints imply nothing more than a surrender of our liberty in some points, in order to maintain it undisturbed in others of more importance. Thus we give up the liberty by repelling force by force, in return for a more equal administration of justice than private resentment would permit. But there are some rights which cannot with any propriety be yielded up to human authority, because they are perfectly consistent with every benefit its appointment can procure. The free use of our faculties in distinguishing truth from falsehood, the exertion of corporeal powers without injury to others, the choice of a religion and worship, are branches of natural freedom which no government can justly alter or diminish, because their restrain cannot conduce to that security which is its proper object. Government, like every other contrivance, has a *specific* end; it implies the resignation of just as much liberty as is needful to attain it; whatever is demanded more is superfluous, a species of tyranny which ought to be corrected by withdrawing it. The relation of master and servant, of pupil and instructor, of the respective members of a family to their head, all include some restraint, some abridgment of natural liberty. But in these cases, it is not pretended that the surrender is total; and why should this be supposed to take place in political society, which is *one* of the relations of human life? this would be to render the foundation infinitely broader than the superstructure.

2. From the notion that political society precludes an appeal to natural rights, the greatest absurdities must ensue. If that idea be just, it is improper to say of any administration, that it is despotic or oppressive, unless it has receded from its first form and model. Civil power can never exceed its limits, until it deviates into a new

track. For, if every portion of natural freedom be given up by yielding to civil authority, we can never claim any other liberties than those precise ones which were ascertained in its first formation. The vassals of despotism may complain, perhaps, of the hardships which they suffer, but, unless it appear they are of *a new kind*, no injury is done them, for no right is violated. Rights are either natural or artificial; the first cannot be pleaded after they are relinquished, and the second cannot be impaired but by a departure from ancient precedents. If a man should be unfortunate enough to live under the dominion of a prince, who, like the monarchs of Persia, could murder his subjects at will, he may be unhappy, but cannot complain; for, on Mr. Hey's theory, he never had any rights but what were created by society, and on Mr. Burke's he has for ever relinquished them. The claims of *nature* being set aside, and the constitution of the government despotic from the beginning, his misery involves no injustice, and admits of no remedy. It requires little discernment to see that this theory rivets the chains of despotism, and shuts out from the political world the smallest glimpse of emancipation or improvement. Its language is, he that is a slave, let him be a slave still.

3. It is incumbent on Mr. Burke and his followers to ascertain the *time* when natural rights are relinquished. Mr. Hey is content with tracing their existence to society, while Mr. Burke, the more moderate of the two, admitting their foundation in nature, only contends that regular government absorbs and swallows them up, bestowing artificial advantages in exchange. But, at what period, it may be inquired, shall we date this wonderful revolution in the social condition of man? If we say it was as early as the first dawn of society, natural liberty had never any existence at all, since there are no traces, even in tradition, of a period when men were utterly unconnected with each other. If we say this complete surrender took place with the first rudiments of law and government in every particular community, on what principle were subsequent improvements introduced?

Mr. Burke is fond of resting our liberties on Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights; but he ought to remember, that, as they do not carry us to the commencement of our government, which was established ages before, our forefathers had long ago resigned their natural liberty. If those famous stipulations only recognised such privileges as were in force before, they have no claim to be considered as the foundations of our constitution; but, it they formed an *æra* in the annals of freedom, they must have been erected on the basis of those natural rights which Mr. Burke ridicules and explodes. When our ancestors made those demands, it is evident they did not suppose an appeal to the rights of nature precluded. Every step a civilized nation can take towards a more equal administration, is either an assertion of its natural liberty, or a criminal encroachment on just authority. The influence of government on the stock of natural rights may be compared to that of a manufactory on the rude produce; it adds nothing to its quantity, but only qualifies and fits it for use. Political arrangement is more or less perfect in proportion as it enables us to exert our natural liberty to the greatest advantage; if it is diverted to any other purpose, it is made the instrument of gratifying the passions of a few, or imposes greater restraint than its object prescribes; it degenerates into tyranny and oppression.

The greatest objection to these principles is their perspicuity, which makes them ill relished by those whose interest it is to hide the nature of government from vulgar eyes, and induce a persuasion, that it is a secret which can only be unfolded to the *initiated* under the conduct of Mr. Burke, the great *Hierophant* and revealer of the mysteries. A mystery and a trick are generally two sides of the same object, according as it is turned to the view of the beholder.

The doctrine of Mr. Locke, and his followers, is founded on the natural equality of mankind; for as no man can have any natural or inherent right to rule any more than another, it necessarily follows, that a claim to dominion, wherever it is lodged, must be ultimately referred

back to the explicit or implied consent of the people. Whatever source of civil authority is assigned different from this, will be found to resolve itself into *mere force.* But as the natural equality of one generation is the same with that of another, the people have always the same right to new model their government, and set aside their rulers. This right, like every other, may be exerted capriciously and absurdly; but no human power can have any pretensions to intercept its exercise. For civil rulers cannot be considered as having any claims that are co-extended with those of the people, nor as forming a party separate from the nation. They are appointed by the community to *execute* its will, not to *oppose* it; to manage the *public*, not to pursue any *private* or *particular* interests. Are all the existing authorities in a state to lie then, it may be said, at the mercy of the populace, liable to be dissipated by the first breath of public discontent? By no means; they are to be respected and obeyed, as interpreters of the public will. Till they are set aside by the unequivocal voice of the people, they are a law to every member of the community. To resist them is rebellion; and for any particular set of men to attempt their subversion by force, is a heinous crime, as they represent and embody the collective majesty of the state. They are the exponents, to use the language of algebra, of the precise quantity of liberty the people have thought fit to legalize and secure. But though they are a law to every member of the society, separately considered, they cannot bind the society itself, or prevent it, when it shall think proper, from forming an entire new arrangement; a right that no compact can alienate or diminish, and which has been exerted as often as a free government has been formed. On this account, in resolving the right of dominion into compact, Mr. Locke appears to me somewhat inconsistent, or he has expressed himself with less clearness and accuracy than was usual with that great philosopher. There must have been a previous right to insist on stipulations in those who formed them : nor is there any reason why

one race of men is not as competent to that purpose as another.

With the enemies of freedom, it is a usual artifice to represent the sovereignty of the people as a licence to anarchy and disorder. But the tracing up civil power to that source will not diminish our obligation to obey; it only explains its reasons, and settles it on clear determinate principles. It turns blind submission into rational obedience, tempers the passion for liberty with the love of order, and places mankind in a happy medium, between the extremes of anarchy on the one side, and oppression on the other. It is the polar star that will conduct us safe over the ocean of political debate and speculation, the law of laws, the legislator of legislators.

To reply to all the objections that have been advanced against this doctrine would be a useless task, and exhaust the patience of the reader; but there is one drawn from the idea of a majority, much insisted on by Mr. Burke, and Mr. Hey, of which the latter gentleman is so enamoured, that he has spread it out into a multitude of pages. They assert, that the theory of natural rights can never be realised, because every member of the community cannot concur in the choice of a government, and the minority being compelled to yield to the decisions of the majority, are under tyrannical restraint. To this reasoning it is a sufficient answer, that, if a number of men act together at all, the necessity of being determined by the sense of the majority, in the last resort, is so obvious, that it is always implied. An exact concurrence of many particular wills is impossible; and therefore, when each taken separately has precisely the same influence, there can be no hardship in suffering the result to remain at issue, till it is determined by the coincidence of the greater number. The idea of *natural liberty*, at least, is so little violated by this method of proceeding, that it is no more than what takes place every day in the smallest society, where the necessity of being determined by the voice of the majority is so plain, that it is scarcely ever reflected

upon. The defenders of the rights of man mean not to contend for impossibilities. We never hear of a right to fly, or to make two and two five. If the majority of a nation approve its government, it is, in this respect, as free as the smallest association or club; any thing beyond which must be visionary and romantic.

The next objection Mr. Hey insists upon, is, if possible, still more frivolous, turning on the case of young persons during minority. He contends, that as some of these have more sense than may be found among common mechanics, and the lowest of the people, *natural right* demands their inclinations to be consulted in political arrangements. Were there any method of ascertaining exactly the degree of understanding possessed by young persons during their minority, so as to distinguish early intellects from the less mature, there would be some force in the objection; in the present case, the whole supposition is no more than one of those chimeras which this gentleman is ever fond of combating, with the same gravity, and to as little purpose, as Don Quixote his windmill.

The period of minority, it is true, varies in different countries, and is, perhaps, best determined every where by ancient custom and habit. An early maturity may confer on sixteen more sagacity than is sometimes found at sixty; but what then? A wise government, having for its object human nature at large, will be adapted, not to its accidental deviations, but to its usual aspects and appearances. For an answer to his argument against natural rights, drawn from the exclusion of women from political power, I beg leave to refer the author to the ingenious Miss Wolstencroft, the eloquent patroness of female claims; unless, perhaps, every other empire may appear mean in the estimation of those, who possess, with an uncontrolled authority, the empire of the heart.

"The situation," says Mr. Hey (p. 137) "in which any man finds himself placed, when he arrives at the power of reflecting, appears to be the consequence of a vast train of events, extending backwards, hundreds

or thousands of years, for aught he can tell, and totally baffling all the attempts at comprehension by human faculties."

From hence he concludes, "all inquiry into the rights of man should be forborne. What rights this Being (God) may have possibly intended that I might claim from beings like myself, if he had thought proper that I had lived amongst them in an *unconnected* state, that is to say, what are the rights of a mere *man*, appears a question involved in such obscurity, that I cannot trace even any indication of that Being having intended me to inquire into it."

If any thing be intended by these observations, it is, that we ought never to attempt to ameliorate our condition, till we are perfectly acquainted with its causes. But as the subjects of the worst government are, probably, as ignorant of the train of events for some thousands of years back, as those who enjoy the best, they are to rest contented, it seems, until they can clear up that obscurity, and inquire no farther.

It would seem strange to presume an inference good, from not knowing how we arrived at it. Yet this seems as reasonable as to suppose the political circumstances of a people fit and proper, on account of our inability to trace the causes that produced them. To know the source of an evil, is only of consequence, as it may chance to conduct us to the remedy. But the whole paragraph I have quoted betrays the utmost perplexity of thought; confounding the *civil condition* of individuals with the political institution of a society. The former will be infinitely various in the same community, arising from the different character, temper, and success of its members: the latter unites and pervades the whole, nor can any abuses attach to it but what may be displayed and remedied.

It is perfectly disingenuous in this author to represent his adversaries as desirous of committing the business of legislation indiscriminately to the meanest of mankind.*

* "A man whose hands and ideas have been usefully confined for thirty or forty years to the labour and management of a farm, or the

He well knows the wildest democratical writer contends for nothing more than popular government by *representation.* If the labouring part of the people are not competent to *choose* legislators, the English constitution is essentially wrong; especially in its present state, where the importance of each vote is enhanced by the paucity of the electors.

After the many examples of misrepresentation which this author has furnished, his declamations on the levelling system cannot be matter of surprise. An equality of rights is perfectly consistent with the utmost disproportion between the objects to which they extend. A peasant may have the same right to the exertion of his faculties with a Newton; but this will not fill up the vast chasm that separates them.

The ministry will feel great obligations to Mr. Hey, for putting off the evil day of reform to a far distant period,—a period so remote, that they may hope, before it is completed, their names and their actions will be buried in friendly oblivion. He indulges a faint expectation, he tells us, that the practice of governments may be improved *in two or three thousand years.*

A smaller edition of this work has lately been published, considerably abridged, for the use of the poor, who, it may be feared, will be very little benefited by its perusal. Genius may dazzle, eloquence may persuade, reason may convince; but to render popular, cold and comfortless sophistry, unaided by those powers, is a hopeless attempt.

I have trespassed, I am afraid, too far on the patience of my readers, in attempting to expose the fallacies by which the followers of Mr. Burke perplex the understanding, and endeavour to hide in obscurity the true

construction of a wall, or piece of cloth, does indeed, in one respect, appear superior to an infant three months old. The man could make a law of some sort or other; the infant could not. The man could, in any particular circumstances of a nation, say those words, We will go to war. or we will not go to war; the infant could not. But the difference between them is more in appearance than in any useful reality. The man is totally unqualified to judge what ought to be enacted for laws." Hey, p. 31.

sources of political power. Were there indeed any impropriety in laying them open, the blame would not fall on the friends of freedom, but on the provocation afforded by the extravagance and absurdity of its enemies. If princely power had never been raised to a level with the attributes of the divinity by Filmer, it had probably never been sunk as low as popular acquiescence by Locke. The confused mixture of liberty and oppression which ran through the feudal system, prevented the theory of government from being closely inspected: particular rights were secured; but the relation of the people to their rulers was never explained on its just principles, till the transfer of superstition to civil power shocked the common sense of mankind, and awakened their inquiries. They drew aside the veil, and where they were taught to expect a mystery, they discerned a fraud. There is, however, no room to apprehend any evil from political investigation, that will not be greatly overbalanced by its advantages. For, besides that truth is always beneficial, tame submission to usurped power has hitherto been the malady of human nature. The dispersed situation of mankind, their indolence and inattention, and the opposition of their passions and interests, are circumstances which render it extremely difficult for them to combine in resisting tyranny with success. In the field of government, as in that of the world, *the tares of despotism were sown while men slept!* The necessity of regular government, under some form or other, is so pressing, that the evil of anarchy is of short duration. Rapid, violent, destructive in its course, it is an inundation which, fed by no constant spring, soon dries up and disappears. The misfortune on these occasions is, that the people, for want of understanding the principles of liberty, seldom reach the true source of their misery; but, after committing a thousand barbarities, only change their masters, when they should change their system.

Section V.

On Dissenters.

Of that foul torrent of insult and abuse, which it has lately been the lot of the friends of liberty to sustain, a larger portion hath fallen to the share of dissenters than any other description of men. Their sentiments have been misrepresented, their loyalty suspected, and their most illustrious characters held up to derision and contempt. The ashes of the dead have been as little spared as the merit of the living; and the same breath that has attempted to depreciate the talents and virtues of a Priestley, is employed to blacken the memory of a Price. The effusions of a distempered loyalty are mingled with execrations on that unfortunate sect; as if the attachment to the king were to be measured by the hatred to dissenters. Without any shadow of criminality, they are doomed to sustain perpetual insult and reproach; their repose disturbed, and their lives threatened and endangered. If dissent be, in truth, a crime of such magnitude that it must not be tolerated, let there be at least a punishment prescribed by law, that they may know what they have to expect, and not lie at the mercy of an enraged and deluded populace. It is natural to inquire into the cause of this extreme virulence against a particular class of the community, who are distinguished from others only by embracing a different form and system of worship.

In the practice of the moral virtues, it will hardly be denied, that they are at least as exemplary as their neighbours; while, in the more immediate duties of religion, if there be any distinction, it lies in their carrying to a greater height, sentiments of seriousness and devotion. The nature of their *public conduct* will best appear from a rapid survey of some of those great political events in which it has had room to display itself; where, though our history has been ransacked to supply

invective, it will be seen, their merits more than compensate for any errors they may have committed. Their zeal in opposing Charles I. has been an eternal theme of reproach; but it should be remembered, that when that resistance first took place, the parliament consisted for the most part of churchmen, and was fully justified in its opposition, by the arbitrary measures of the court. Had the pretensions of Charles been patiently acquiesced in, our government had long ago been despotic.

What medium might have been found between tame submission and open hostility, and whether matters were not afterwards pushed to an extremity against the unfortunate monarch, it is not for me to determine, nor does it concern the vindication of dissenters. For long before the final catastrophe which issued in the king's death, the favourable intentions of parliament were overruled by the ascendancy of Cromwell; the parliament itself oppressed by his arms, and the influence both of churchmen and dissenters bent under military usurpation. The execution of Charles was the deed of a faction, condemned by the great body of the puritans as a criminal severity. But whatever blame they may be supposed to have incurred on account of their conduct to Charles, the merit of restoring monarchy in his son was all their own. The entire force of the empire was in their hands; Monk himself of their party; the parliament, the army, all puritans; yet were they disinterested enough to call the heir to the throne, and yield the reins into his hands, with no other stipulation than that of liberty of conscience, which he violated with a baseness and ingratitude peculiar to his character. All the return he made them for the recovery of his power, consisted in depriving two thousand of their ministers, and involving the whole body in a persecution, by which not less than ten thousand are supposed to have perished in imprisonment and want. But their patriotism was not to be shaken by these injuries. When, towards the latter end of Charles the Second's reign, the character of his successor inspired a dread of the establishment of popery, to avert that evil they cheerfully acquiesced in an exclusion from all places

of emolument and trust; an extraordinary instance of magnanimity. When James the Second began to display arbitrary views, dissenters were among the first to take the alarm, regarding with jealousy even an indulgence when it flowed from a dispensing power. The zeal with which they cooperated in bringing about the revolution, the ardour with which they have always espoused its principles, are too well known to need any proof, and can only be rendered more striking by a contrast with the conduct of the high church party. The latter maintained, in its utmost extent, the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance; were incessantly engaged in intrigues to overturn the revolution; and affirmed the doctrine of divine right to be an ancient and indisputable tenet of the English Church. Whoever wishes to ascertain the existence of those arts, by which they embroiled the reign of King William, may see them displayed at large in Burnet's History of his own Times.

The attachment of dissenters to the house of Hanover was signalized in a manner too remarkable to be soon forgotten. In the rebellions of fifteen and forty-five, they ventured on a breach of the law, by raising and officering regiments out of their own body; for which the parliament were reduced to the awkward expedient of passing an act of indemnity. This short sketch of their political conduct, as it is sufficient to establish their loyalty beyond suspicion, so may it well augment our surprise at the extreme obloquy and reproach with which they are treated. Mr. Hume, a competent judge, if ever there was one, of political principles, and who was far from being partial to dissenters, candidly confesses that to them we are indebted for the preservation of liberty.

The religious opinions of dissenters are so various, that there is perhaps no point in which they are agreed, except in asserting the rights of conscience against all human control and authority. From the time of Queen Elizabeth, under whom they began to make their appearance, their views of religious liberty have gradually extended, commencing at first with a disapprobation of certain rites and ceremonies, the remains of papal super-

stition. Their total separation from the church did not take place for more than a century after; till, despairing of seeing it erected on a comprehensive plan, and being morever persecuted for their difference of sentiment, they were compelled at last, reluctantly to withdraw. Having been thus directed by a train of events into the right path, they pushed their principles to their legitimate consequences, and began to discern the impropriety of all religious establishments whatever, a sentiment in which they are now nearly united. On this very account, however, of all men they are least likely to disturb the peace of society; for they claim no other liberty than what they wish the whole human race to possess, that of deciding on every question where conscience is concerned. It is sufferance they plead for, not establishment; protection, not splendour. A disposition to impose their religion on others cannot be suspected in men, whose distinguishing religious tenet is the disavowal of all human authority.

Their opinion respecting establishments is founded upon reasons which appear to them weighty and solid. They have remarked, that in the three first and purest ages of religion, the church was a stranger to any alliance with temporal powers; that far from needing their aid, christianity never flourished so much as while they were combined to suppress it; and that the protection of Constantine, though well intended, diminished its purity more than it added to its splendour.

The only pretence for uniting christianity with civil government, is the support it yields to the peace and good order of society. But this benefit will be derived from it, at least in as great a degree, without an establishment as with it. Religion, if it has any power, operates on the *conscience* of men. Resting solely on the belief of invisible realities, and having for its object the good and evil of eternity, it can derive no additional weight or solemnity from human sanctions; but will appear to the most advantage upon hallowed ground, remote from the noise and tumults of worldly policy. Can it be imagined that a dissenter, who believes in di-

vine revelation, does not feel the same moral restraints, as if he had received his religion from the hands of parliament? Human laws may debase christianity, but can never improve it; and, being able to add nothing to its evidence, they can add nothing to its force.

Happy had it been, however, had civil establishments of religion been *useless* only, instead of being productive of the greatest evils. But, when christianity is established by law, it is requisite to give the preference to some particular system; and, as the magistrate is no better judge of religion than others, the chances are as great of his lending his sanction to the false as to the true. Splendour and emolument must likewise be in some degree attached to the national church: which are a strong inducement to its ministers to defend it, be it ever so remote from the truth. Thus error becomes permanent, and that set of opinions which happens to prevail when the establishment is formed, continues, in spite of superior light and improvement, to be handed down without alteration from age to age. Hence the disagreement between the public creed of the church and the private sentiments of its ministers; an evil growing out of the very nature of an hierarchy, and not likely to be remedied before it brings the clerical character into the utmost contempt. Hence the rapid spread of infidelity in various parts of Europe; a natural and never-failing consequence of the corrupt alliance between church and state. Wherever we turn our eyes, we shall perceive the depression of religion is in proportion to the elevation of the hierarchy. In France, where the establishment had attained the utmost splendour, piety had utterly decayed; in England, where the hierarchy is less splendid, more remains of the latter; and in Scotland, whose national church is one of the poorest in the world, a greater sense of religion appears among the inhabitants than in either of the former. It must likewise be plain to every observer, that piety flourishes much more among dissenters, than among the members of any establishment whatever. This progress of things is so natural, that nothing seems to be wanting in any

country, to render the thinking part of the people infidels, but a splendid establishment. It will always ultimately debase the clerical character, and perpetuate, both in discipline and doctrine, every error and abuse.

Turn a christian society into an established church, and it is no longer a voluntary assembly for the worship of God; it is a powerful corporation, full of such sentiments and passions as usually distinguish those bodies; a dread of innovation, an attachment to abuses, a propensity to tyranny and oppression. Hence the convulsions that accompany religious reform, where the truth of the opinions in question is little regarded, amidst the alarm that is felt for the splendour, opulence, and power which they are the means of supporting. To this alliance of christianity with civil power it is owing that ecclesiastical history presents a chaos of crimes; and that the progress of religious opinions, which, left to itself, had been calm and silent, may be traced in blood.

Among the evils attending the alliance of church and state, it is not the least, that it begets a notion of their interests having some kind of inseparable, though mysterious connexion; so that they who are dissatisfied with the one must be enemies to the other. Our very language is tinctured with this delusion, in which church and king are blended together with an arrogance that seems copied from Cardinal Wolsey's *Ego et rex meus*, I and my king; as if the establishment were of more consequence than the sovereign who represents the collective majesty of the state. Let the interference of civil power be withdrawn, and the animosity of sects will subside for want of materials to inflame it; nor will any man suspect his neighbour for being of a different religion, more than for being of a different complexion from himself. The practice of toleration, it is true, has much abated the violence of those convulsions which, for more than a century from the beginning of the reformation, shook Europe to its base; but the source and spring of intolerance is by no means exhausted. The steam from that infernal pit will issue through the crevices, until they are filled up with the *ruins* of all human establishments.

The alliance between church and state is, in a *political point of view*, extremely suspicious, and much better fitted to the genius of an arbitrary than a free government. To the former it may yield a powerful support; to the latter it must ever prove dangerous. The spiritual submission it exacts is unfavourable to mental vigour, and prepares the way for a servile acquiescence in the encroachments of civil authority. This is so correspondent with *facts*, that the epithet high church, when applied to politics, is familiarly used in our language to convey the notion of arbitrary maxims of government.

As far as submission to civil magistrates is a branch of moral virtue, christianity will, under every form, be sure to enforce it; for, among the various sects and parties into which its profession is divided, there subsists an entire agreement respecting the moral duties it prescribes. To select, therefore, and endow a *particular order* of clergy to teach the duties of submission, is useless as a mean to secure the peace of a society, though well fitted to produce a slavish subjection. Ministers of that description, considering themselves as allies of the state, yet having no civil department, will be disposed, on all occasions, to strike in with the current of the court; nor are they likely to confine the obligation to obedience within any just and reasonable bounds. They will insensibly become an army of spiritual janizaries. Depending, as they every where must, upon the sovereign, his prerogative can never be exalted too high for their emolument, nor can any better instruments be contrived for the accomplishment of arbitrary designs. Their compact and united form, composing a chain of various links which hangs suspended from the throne, admirably fits them for conveying the impression that may soothe, inflame, or mislead the people.

These are the evils which, in my opinion, attach to civil establishments of christianity. They are, indeed, often mitigated by the virtue of their members; and among the English clergy in particular, as splendid examples of virtue and talents might be produced as any

which the annals of human nature can afford; but in all our reasonings concerning *men*, we must lay it down as a maxim, that the greater part are moulded by circumstances. If we wish to see the *true spirit* of an hierarchy, we have only to attend to the conduct of what is usually termed the high church party.

While they had sufficient influence with the legislature, they impelled it to persecute; and now that a more enlightened spirit has brought that expedient into disgrace, they turn to the people, and endeavour to inflame their minds by the arts of calumny and detraction. When the dissenters applied for the repeal of the corporation and test acts, an alarm was spread of the church being in danger, and their claim was defeated. From the late opposition of the bishops to the repeal of the penal statutes, we learn that they have lost the power rather than the inclination to persecute, or they would be happy to abolish the monuments of a spirit they ceased to approve. The nonsense and absurdity comprised in that part of our laws would move laughter in a company of peasants; but nothing is thought mean or contemptible which is capable of being forged into a weapon of hostility against dissenters. To perpetuate laws which there is no intention to execute, is certainly the way to bring law into contempt; but the truth is, that unwilling to relinquish the right of persecution, though they have no immediate opportunity of exerting it, they retain these statutes as a body in reserve, ready to be brought into the field on the first occasion that shall offer.*

The prejudice entertained against us, is not the work of a day, but the accumulation of ages, flowing from the fixed antipathy of a numerous and powerful order of men, distributed through all the classes of

* This disgrace to the legislation of a great and free country has at length, but not till more than a third part of a century had elapsed after the above reproach was penned, been finally removed, by an enactment for which the Dissenters are especially indebted to the able and zealous exertions of that noble example and advocate of all liberal principles, Lord John Russell.—Ed.

society; nor is it easy to conceive to what a pitch popular resentment may be inflamed by artful management and contrivance. Our situation in this respect bears a near resemblance to that of the primitive christians, against whom, though in themselves the most inoffensive of mankind, the malice of the populace was directed, to a still greater degree, by similar arts and upon similar principles. The clamour of the fanatic rabble, the devout execration of dissenters, will remind the reader of ecclesiastical history of the excesses of pagan ferocity, when the people, instigated by their priests, were wont to exclaim, *Christianos ad leones.* There is the less hope of this animosity being allayed, from its having arisen from *permanent causes.* That christianity is a simple institution, unallied to worldly power; that a church is a voluntary society, invested with a right to choose its own officers, and acknowledging no head but Jesus Christ; that ministers are brethren whose emolument should be confined to the voluntary contributions of the people, are maxims drawn from so high an authority, that it may well be apprehended that the church is doomed to vanish before them. Under these circumstances, whatever portion of talents or of worth dissenters may possess, serves only to render them more hated, because more formidable. Had they merely revelled with the wanton, and drunk with the drunken; had they been clothed with curses, they might have been honoured and esteemed notwithstanding, as true sons of the church; but their dissent is a crime too indelible in the eyes of their enemies for any virtue to alleviate, or any merit to efface.

Till the test business was agitated, however, we were not aware of our labouring under such a weight of prejudice. Confiding in the mildness of the times, and conscious that every trace of resentment was vanished from our own breasts, we fondly imagined that those of churchmen were equally replete with sentiments of generosity and candour. We accordingly ventured on a renewal of our claim as men, and as citizens; but had not proceeded far, before we were assailed with the bit-

terest reproaches. The innocent design of relieving ourselves from a disgraceful proscription, was construed by our enemies into an attack on the church and state. Their opposition was both more violent and more formidable than was expected. They let us see, that however languidly the flame of their devotion may burn, that of resentment and party spirit, like vestal fire, must never be extinguished in their temples. Calumnies continued to be propagated, till they produced the riots at Birmingham, that ever memorable æra in the annals of bigotry and fanaticism, when Europe beheld, with astonishment and regret, the outrage sustained by philosophy in the most enlightened of countries and in the first of her sons! When we hear such excesses as these justified and applauded, we seem to be falling back apace into the darkness of the middle ages.

The connexion between civil and religious liberty is too intimate to make it surprising, that they who are attached to the one should be friendly to the other. The dissenters have accordingly seldom failed to lend their support to men who seemed likely to restore the vigour of a sinking constitution. Parliamentary reform has been cherished by them with an ardour equal to its importance. This part of their character inflames opposition still farther; and affords a pretext to their enemies for overwhelming the cause of liberty under an obnoxious name. The reproach on this head, however, is felt as an honour, when it appears by their conduct that they despair of attacking liberty with success, while the reputation of dissenters remains undiminished. The enmity of the vicious is the test of virtue.

Dissenters are reproached with the appellation of republicans; but the truth of the charge has neither appeared from facts, nor been supported by any reasonable evidence. Among them, as among other classes (and in no greater proportion), there are persons to be found, no doubt, who, without any hostility to the present government, prefer in theory a republican to a monarchical form; a point on which the most enlightened men in all ages have entertained very different opinions. In a

government like ours, consisting of three simple elements, as this variety of sentiment may naturally be expected to take place, so if any predilection be felt toward one more than another, that partiality seems most commendable which inclines to the republican part. At most it is only the love of liberty to excess. The mixture of monarchy and nobility is chiefly of use, as it gives regularity, order, and stability to popular freedom. Were we, however, without any proof, to admit that dissenters are more tinctured with republican principles than others, it might be considered as the natural effect of the absurd conduct of the legislature. Exposed to pains and penalties, excluded from all offices of trust, proscribed by the spirit of the present reign, menaced and insulted wherever they appear, they must be more than men if they felt no resentment, or were passionately devoted to the ruling powers. To expect affection in return for injury, is to gather where they have not scattered, and reap where they have not sown. The superstition of dissenters is not so abject as to prompt them to worship the constitution through fear. Yet as they have not forgotten the benefits it imparted, and the protection it afforded till of late, they are too much its friends to flatter its defects or defend its abuses. Their only wish is to see it reformed and reduced to its original principles.

In recent displays of loyalty they must acknowledge themselves extremely defective. They have never plundered their neighbours to show their attachment to the King; nor has their zeal for religion ever broke out into oaths and execrations. They have not proclaimed their respect for regular government by a breach of the laws; or attempted to maintain tranquillity by riots. These beautiful specimens of loyalty belong to the virtue and moderation of the high church party alone, with whose character they perfectly correspond.

In a scurrilous paper which has been lately circulated with malignant industry, the dissenters at large, and Dr. Price in particular, are accused, with strange effrontery, of having involved us in the American war; when it is

well known they ever stood aloof from that scene of guilt and blood.

Had their remonstrances been regarded, the calamities of that war had never been incurred; but, what is of more consequence in the estimation of anonymous scribblers, there would have remained one lie less to swell the catalogue of their falsehoods.

From the joy which dissenters have expressed at the French revolution, it has been most absurdly inferred that they wish for a similar event in England, without considering that such a conclusion is a libel on the British constitution, as it must proceed on a supposition that our government is as despotic as the ancient monarchy of France. To imagine the feelings must be the same when the objects are so different, shows a most lamentable degree of malignity and folly.

Encompassed as dissenters are by calumny and reproach, they have still the satisfaction to reflect, that these have usually been the lot of distinguished virtue; and that, in the corrupt state of men's interests and passions, the unpopularity of a cause is rather a presumption of its excellence.

They will be still more happy if the frowns of the world should be the means of reviving that spirit of evangelical piety which once distinguished them so highly. Content if they can gain protection, without being so romantic as to aspire to praise, they will continue firm, I doubt not, in those principles which they have hitherto acted on, unseduced by rewards, and unshaken by dangers. From the passions of their enemies they will appeal to the judgement of posterity;—a more impartial tribunal. Above all, they will calmly await the decision of the Great Judge, before whom both they and their enemies must appear, and the springs and sources of their mutual animosity be laid open; when the clouds of misrepresentation being scattered, it will be seen they are a virtuous and oppressed people, who are treading, though with unequal steps, in the path of those illustrious prophets, apostles, and martyrs, of whom the world was not worthy. In the mean time they are

far from envying the popularity and applause which may be acquired in a contrary course; esteeming the reproaches of freedom above the splendours of servitude.

SECTION VI.

On the Causes of the present Discontents.

WE have arrived, it is a melancholy truth which can no longer be concealed, we have at length arrived at that crisis when nothing but speedy and effectual reform can save us from ruin. An amendment in the representation is wanted, as well to secure the liberty we already possess, as to open the way for the removal of those abuses which pervade every branch of the administration. The accumulation of debt and taxes, to a degree unexampled in any other age or country, has so augmented the influence of the crown, as to destroy the equipoise and balance of the constitution. The original design of the funding system, which commenced in the reign of King William, was to give stability to the revolution, by engaging the monied interest to embark on its bottom. It immediately advanced the influence of the crown, which the whigs then exalted as much as possible, as a countervail to the interest of the Pretender.

The mischief of this short-sighted policy cannot be better described than in the language of Bolingbroke. "Few men," says he, "at that time looked forward enough to foresee the consequences of the new constitution of the revenue that was soon afterward formed, nor of the method of the funding system that immediately took place; which, absurd, as they are, have continued since, till it has become scarce possible to alter them. Few people, I say, foresaw how the multiplication of taxes, and the creation of funds, would increase yearly the power of the crown, and bring our liberties by a natural and necessary progression into a more real, though less apparent danger, than they were in before the revolution; a due reflection on the experience of

other ages and countries, would have pointed out national corruption as the natural and necessary consequence of investing the crown with the management of so vast a revenue; and also, the loss of liberty as the natural and necessary consequence of national corruption."*

If there be any truth in these reflections, how much must our apprehensions be heightened by the prodigious augmentation of revenue and debt, since the time of George the First! What a harvest has been reaped from the seeds of corruption then sown! The revenue is now upwards of seventeen millions; and though nine are employed to pay the interest of the national debt, this is small consolation, when we reflect that that debt is the remnant of wasteful, destructive wars, and that, till there is a change in the system, we are continually liable to similar calamities. The multiplied channels through which seventeen millions of money must flow into the treasury, the legion of officers it creates, the patronage its expenditure on the several branches of the administration supplies, have rendered the influence of the crown nearly absolute and decisive. The control of parliament sinks under this pressure into formality: the balance of the different orders becomes a mere theory, which serves to impose upon ignorance and varnish corruption. There is no power in the state that can act as a sufficient antagonist to the silent irresistible force of royal patronage.

The influence of the crown, by means of its revenue, is more dangerous than prerogative, in proportion as corruption operates after a more concealed manner than force. A violent act of prerogative is sensibly felt, and creates an alarm; but it is the nature of corruption to lay apprehension asleep, and to effect its purposes while the forms of liberty remain undisturbed. The first employs force to enslave the people; the second employs the people to enslave themselves. The most determined enemy to freedom can wish for nothing more than the continuance of present abuses. While the semblance of

* Letter II. on the Study of History.

representation can be maintained, while popular delusion can be kept up, he will spare the *extremities* of liberty. He aims at a higher object, that of *striking at the heart.*

A fatal lethargy has long been spreading amongst us, attended, as is natural, with a prevailing disposition both in and out of parliament, to treat plans of reform with contempt. After the accession, place and pension bills were frequently passed by the commons, though rejected by the lords; nothing of that nature is now ever attempted. A standing army in time of peace was a subject of frequent complaint, and is expressly provided against by the Bill of Rights; it is now become a part of the constitution; for though the nominal direction be placed in parliament, the mutiny bill passes as a matter of course, the forces are never disbanded; the more completely to detach them from the community, barracks are erected; and martial law is established in its utmost severity. If freedom can survive this expedient, copied from the practice of foreign despots, it will be an instance of unexampled good fortune. Mr. Hume terms it a mortal distemper in the British constitution, of which it must *inevitably* perish.

To whatever cause it be owing, it is certain the measures of administration have, during the present reign, leaned strongly towards arbitrary power. The decision on the Middlesex election was a blow aimed at the vitals of the constitution. Before the people had time to recover from their panic, they were plunged into the American war—a war of pride and ambition, and ending in humiliation and disgrace. The spirit of the government is so well understood, that the most violent even of the clergy are content to drop their animosity, to turn their affections into a new channel, and to devote to the house of Hanover the flattery and the zeal by which they ruined the race of Stuart. There cannot be a clearer symptom of the decay of liberty than the dread of speculative opinions; which is, at present, carried to a length in this nation that can scarcely be exceeded. Englishmen were accustomed till of late, to

make political speculation the amusement of leisure, and the employment of genius; they are now taught to fear it more than death. Under the torpid touch of despotism the patriotic spirit has shrunk into a narrow compass; confined to gaze with admiration on the proceedings of parliament, and listen to the oracles of the minister with silent acquiescence, and pious awe. Abuses are sacred, and the pool of corruption must putrify in peace. Persons who a few years back were clamorous for reform, are making atonement for having been betrayed into any appearance of virtue, by a quick return to their natural character. Is not the kingdom peopled with spies and informers? Are not inquisitorial tribunals erected in every corner of the land? A stranger who, beholding a whole nation filled with alarm, should inquire the cause of the commotion, would be a little surprised on being informed, that instead of any appearance of insurrection, or plots, a pamphlet had only been published. In a government upheld by so immense a revenue, and boasting a constitution declared to be the envy of the world, this abject distrust of its own power is more than a million lectures on corruptions and abuses. The wisdom of ages, the master-piece of human policy, complete in all its parts, and that needs no reformation, can hardly support itself against a sixpenny pamphlet, devoid, it is said, of truth or ability! To require sycophants to blush, is exacting too great a departure from the decorum of their character: but common sense might be expected to remain, after shame is extinguished.

Whoever seriously contemplates the present infatuation of the people, and the character of the leaders, will be tempted to predict the speedy downfall of liberty. They cherish the forms, while they repress the spirit of the constitution; they persecute freedom, and adorn its sepulchre. When corruption has struck its roots so deep, it may be doubted whether even the liberty of the press be not of more detriment than advantage. The prints, which are the common sources of information, are replete with falsehood; virtue is calumniated; and

scarcely are any characters safe from their blast, except the advocates of corruption. The greater part, no doubt are in the pay of ministry, or their adherents. Thus delusion spreads, and the people are instructed to confound anarchy with reform, their friends with their oppressors.

Who can hear, without indignant contempt, the minister's annual eulogium on the English constitution? Is the parliament so ignorant, then, that it needs to go to school every session to learn those elements of political knowledge which every Briton understands? Or is the nature of the British constitution a secret in the breast of the ministry to be opened with the budget? Indisputable excellence wants no encomium; but this flattery is intended to bury, in an admiration of its merit, all remembrance of its defects. Whatever remains of beauty or vigour it possesses, are held in no estimation but as they produce an acquiescence in abuses. It is its imperfections only ministers admire; its corruptions that solace them. The topics of their encomium are as absurd as the purpose is infamous. The flourishing state of trade and manufactures is displayed in proof of the unequalled excellence of the British constitution, without reflecting that a temporary decay will support with equal force an opposite conclusion. For if we owe our present prosperity to the nature of the government, our recent calamities must be traced to the same source, and that constitution which is now affirmed to be the best, must be allowed during the American war to have been the worst. That there is a connexion between commercial prosperity and the nature of a government, must be admitted; but its operation is gradual and slow, not felt from year to year, but to be traced by the comparison of one age and country with another. But, allowing that our wealth may increase along with the increase of abuses, the nation, we hope, is not so sordid as to look upon wealth as the supreme good; however well that idea may correspond with the views of a ministry, who seem determined to leave us no other. Freedom as it animates industry, by securing its rewards,

opens a path to wealth, but if that wealth be suffered to debase a people, and render them venal and dependent, it will silently conduct them back again to misery and depression. Rome was never more opulent than on the eve of departing liberty. Her vast wealth was a sediment that remained on the reflux of the tide. It is quite unnecessary to remind the reader how all this at present is reversed, and that the unbounded prodigality of Mr. Pitt and his successors in the conduct of the war, which the corruption of parliament enabled them to maintain, has plunged the nation into the deepest abyss of poverty and distress.

It is singular enough, but I hope not ominous, that the flattery bestowed by the poets of antiquity on the ruling powers resembles, in everything but its elegance, the adulation of modern sycophants. The extent of empire, the improvement of arts, the diffusion of opulence and splendour, are the topics with which Horace adorned the praises of Augustus: but the penetration of Tacitus developes, amidst these flattering appearances, the seeds of ruin. The florid bloom but ill concealed that fatal malady which preyed upon the vitals.

Between the period of national honour and complete degeneracy, there is usually an interval of national vanity, during which examples of virtue are recounted and admired without being imitated. The Romans were never more proud of their ancestors than when they ceased to resemble them. From being the freest and most high-spirited people in the world, they suddenly fell into the tamest and most abject submission. Let not the name of Britons, my countrymen, too much elate you; nor ever think yourselves safe while you abate one jot of that holy jealousy by which your liberties have been hitherto secured. The richer the inheritance bequeathed you, the more it merits your care for its preservation. The possession must be continued by that spirit with which it was at first acquired; and, as it was gained by vigilance, it will be lost by supineness. A degenerate race repose on the merit of their forefathers; the virtuous create a fund of their own. The

former look back upon their ancestors, to hide their shame: the latter look forward to posterity, to levy a tribute of admiration. In vain will you confide in the forms of a free constitution. Unless you reanimate those forms with fresh vigour, they will be melancholy memorials of what you once were, and haunt you with the shade of departed liberty. A silent stream of corruption poured over the whole land, has tainted every branch of the administration with decay. On your temperate but manly exertions depend the happiness and freedom of the latest posterity. That Assembly which sits by right of representation, will be little inclined to oppose your will, expressed in a firm, decisive manner. You may be deafened by clamour, misled by sophistry, or weakened by division, but you cannot be despised with impunity. A vindictive ministry may hang the terrors of criminal prosecution over the heads of a few with success; but at their peril will they attempt to intimidate a nation. The trick of associations, of pretended plots, and silent insurrections, will oppose a feeble barrier to the impression of the popular mind.

The theory of the constitution in the most important particulars is a satire on the practice. The theory provides the responsibility of ministers as a check to the execution of ill designs; but in reality we behold the basest of the tribe retreat from the ruin of their country, loaded with honours and with spoils. Theory tells us the parliament is free and independent; experience will correct the mistake by showing its subservience to the crown. We learn, from the first, that the legislature is chosen by the unbiassed voice of all who can be supposed to have a will of their own; we learn, from the last, the pretended electors are but a handful of the people, who are never less at their own disposal than in the business of election. The theory holds out equal benefits to all, and equal liberty, without any other discrimination than that of a good and bad subject: its practice brands with proscription and disgrace a numerous class of inhabitants on account of their religion. In theory, the several orders of the state are a check on

each other; but corruption has oiled the wheels of that machinery, harmonized its motions, and enabled it to bear, with united pressure, on the happiness of the people.

The principal remedy for the diseases of the state is undoubtedly a reform in parliament; from which, as a central point, inferior improvements may issue; but as I have already treated on that subject at large, I shall not insist on it here. I cannot close this pamphlet, however, without adverting for a moment to a few of the principal objects which well merit the attention of the legislature.

On the abuses in the church, it is to little purpose to expatiate, as they are too numerous to be detailed, and too inveterate to be corrected. Unless it be a maxim that honesty will endanger her existence, her creeds ought in all reason to correspond with the sentiments of her members. The world, it is to be feared, will be little edified by the example of a church, which, in compelling its ministers to subscribe to opinions that few of them believe, is a discipline of fraud. Nor is the collection of tithes calculated to soften the odium. As a mode of union with the parishioners, they are fruitful of contention; as a restraint on the improvement of land, impolitic and oppressive; as a remnant of the Jewish law, superstitious and absurd. True magnanimity would instruct the clergy to recede from a claim which they will probably be compelled shortly to relinquish. But no reform, it seems, must take place in the church any more than in the state, that its corruptions may keep pace with the progress of its ally.

The condition of the poor in this country, calls for compassion and redress. Many of them, through the want of mental improvement, are sunk almost beneath the level of humanity;* and their hard-earned pittance

* The change in this respect, since the first publication of the "Apology," is of the most gratifying kind. All ranks of society, and all persuasions of christians, have vied with each other in their efforts to give religious and other useful instruction to the children of the poor. Still, there remains much to be done, and we are with respect

is so diminished by taxes, that it is with the utmost difficulty they can nourish their children, and utterly impossible to afford them education. The poor laws enacted for their relief, by confining their industry to a particular spot, and denying them the privilege of residing where they may exert it to the greatest advantage, are an accumulated oppression. Were industry allowed to find its level, were the poor laws abolished, and a small portion of that expense which swells the tide of corruption, the splendours of the great, and the miseries of war, bestowed on the instruction of the common people, the happy effects would descend to the remotest posterity, and open a prospect which humanity might delight to anticipate. In England, we have been adding wheel to wheel, and spring to spring, till we have rendered the machine of government far too complicated; forgetting, in the midst of wars, negotiations, and factious disputes, that the true end of civil polity is the happiness of the people. We have listened to every breeze that moves along the surface of Europe, and descried danger from afar; while deaf to the complaints of the poor, we have beheld ignorance, wretchedness and barbarity multiply at home, without the smallest regard. Is it possible to behold with patience the numberless tribe of placemen, pensioners, and sycophants who are enriched at the public expense; a noxious spawn engendered by the corruptions of government, and nourished by its diseases. Were our immense revenue conducive to the maintenance of royal dignity, or proportioned to the exigencies of the state, it would be borne with pleasure; but, at present it bids fair to be the purchase of our servitude.

Our laws, in order to become a proper rule of civil life, much want revision and amendment. They are, moreover, never promulgated. For this omission, Judge Blackstone assigns a very curious reason: "That being enacted by our representatives, every man is supposed,

to the general education of the lower classes, *very* far behind the Americans, especially those in the state of New York.—Ed.

in the eye of the law, to be present in the legislature." It would be an improvement on this delegated knowledge of the law, if the penalty were also delegated, and criminals punished by representation. The laws, in their present state, are so piled into volumes, encumbered with precedents, and perplexed with intricacies, that they are often rather a snare than a guide, and are a fruitful source of the injustice they are intend to prevent. The expense is as formidable as the penalty; nor is it to any purpose to say they are the same to the poor as to the rich, while by their delay, expense, and perplexity, they are placed on an eminence, which opulence only can ascend. The commendation bestowed so liberally by foreigners on English jurisprudence, was never meant to be extended to our municipal code, which is confused, perplexed, and sanguinary in the extreme; but to the trial by jury, and the dignified impartiality which marks the conduct of the judges. For want of gradual improvements, to enable it to keep pace with the progress of society, the most useful operations of law are clouded by fictions.*

These are a few only of the maladies which indicate a bad habit of the political body; nor can a true estimate be made of our situation so much by adverting to *particular evils*, as by an attention to the general aspect of affairs. The present crisis is, in my apprehension, the fullest of terror and of danger we have ever experienced. In the extension of excise laws, in the erection of barracks, in the determined adherence to abuses displayed by parliament, in the desertion of pretended patriots, the spread of arbitrary principles, the tame subdued spirit of the nation, we behold the seeds of political ruin quickening into life. The *securities* of liberty, as was long since remarked by Dr. Price, have given way; and what remains is little more than an *indulgence*, which cannot continue long, when it ceases to be cherished in the affections of the people. The little of public virtue that still subsists, is no match for disciplined armies of

* See an excellent publication on this subject, entitled "Juridical Essays," by Mr. Randall.

corruption. The people are perishing for lack of knowledge. Disquieted by imaginary alarms, insensible to the real danger that awaits them, they are taught to court that servitude which will be a source of misery to themselves and to posterity.

Deplorable as the prospect is, a precarious hope may be founded, perhaps, on the magnitude of abuses. There is, it has often been remarked, an ultimate point, both of elevation and depression, in the affairs of kingdoms, to which, when they arrive, they begin to turn of their own accord, and to fall back into their ancient channels. We are certainly entitled to all the comfort that consideration is capable of affording. Taxation can hardly be more oppressive, representation more venal and inadequate, the influence of the people more extinguished, or falsehood and deception more triumphant, than they are at present.

There is also another circumstance attending the present crisis, which, if we are wise enough to improve it, may be of the utmost advantage. Of the numberless political parties which have hitherto distracted our attention, and divided our attachment, there now remain but two; the patrons of corruption, and the friends of liberty; they who are waiting for the disorders of government to ripen into arbitrary power, and they who are anxious to bring back the constitution to its original principles. The colours by which they are distinguished are too bold and strong to be ever confounded; or if there could be any possible embarrassment in the choice, the ministry have condescended to remove that obscurity, by pursuing an interest not only distinct from, but directly opposed to that of the people. The clamour of whigs and tories hath happily subsided; and pretended patriots are at length so kind as to unmask before the people, and stand forth in their native character, the objects of just detestation. We cannot wish for better lessons of public virtue than is furnished by the contrast of their vices.

On the present war, until the views of the ministry are more unfolded, it behoves me to speak with tenderness and reserve. If nothing more be intended than the

maintenance of national honour, and the faith of treaties, it will merit the warmest support of every well-wisher to his country. But if the re-establishment of the ancient government of France be any part of the object; if it be a war with freedom, a confederacy of kings against the rights of man; it will be the last humiliation and disgrace that can be inflicted on Great Britain; and, were there any truth in tales of incantation, to behold us engaged in such a cause, were enough to disturb the repose of our ancestors, and move the ashes of the dead! The steps preparatory to the war, the inflamed passions, and the character of our allies, afford an ill omen of the temper with which it will be conducted. The pretence respecting the Netherlands certainly entitles the ministry to the praise of consistence. It is quite of a piece with the candour and sincerity which affirmed the balance of Europe to be destroyed by the seizure of Oczakow, but denied it was endangered by the conquest of Poland, and the invasion of France.

The French revolution, we cannot but remember, was from the first an object of jealousy to ministers. There needed not the late unhappy excesses, the massacres of September, and the execution of Louis, to excite or display their hostility. It appeared in the insult and derision of their retainers, from the highest to the lowest. If they meant fairly to the interests of general liberty, why that uneasiness at the fall of despotism in a neighbouring country? Why render parliament a theatre of abuse on a revolution, whose commencement was distinguished by unexampled mildness and tranquillity? But this part of their conduct was likewise consistent. Intent on the destruction of liberty in one country, they were disconcerted at seeing it revive in another; and before they ventured to extinguish the dying taper, waited for the surrounding scene to be shut up in darkness. I am perfectly aware, that to speak in terms of decency and respect of the French revolution, is to incur, in the prevailing disposition of the times, the last of infamies. If we dare to rejoice at the emancipation of a great people from thraldom, it must be at the peril of the foulest im-

putations that imagination can invent, or malignity apply. In contempt, however, of these calumnies, I am free to confess, the French revolution has always appeared to me, and does still appear, the most splendid event recorded in the annals of history. The friends of liberty contemplate the crimes and disorders with which it has been stained* with the deepest regret; but they still hope that they will in the result be more than compensated, by the grandeur of its principles, and the beneficence of its effects. Instead of wishing for a similar event in England, they are intent on reform chiefly to avoid that necessity. Under every *form* of government they know how to recognise the divine aspect of freedom, and without it can be satisfied with none. The evils of anarchy and of despotism are two extremes which they equally dread; and between which no middle path can be found, but that of effectual reform. To avert the calamities that await us on either side, the streams of corruption must be drained off, the independence of parliament restored, the ambition of aristocracy repressed, and the majesty of the people lift itself up. It is possible to retreat from the brink of a precipice, but woe to that nation which sleeps upon it!

* The execution of the king was certainly a most cruel and unjustifiable transaction, alike repugnant to law, order, and humanity. Without being conducive to any views of policy whatever, it seems to have been merely a gratification of the most detestable passions. The treatment of the beautiful and unfortunate queen, and of the royal family, is barbarous and unmanly in the extreme. When we look at their sufferings, humanity weeps, and pity forgets their crimes.

REVIEW

OF THE

APOLOGY FOR THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

PUBLISHED IN

THE CHRISTIAN GUARDIAN:

AND

MR. HALL'S REPLY.

[Published in 1822.]

REVIEW

OF

MR. HALL'S FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.*

Extracted from the Christian Guardian for Jan. 1822.

"The political principles of the Bible are simple, distinct, and plain. The sacred writers enter into no niceties, draw no lines of exact demarcation, meet no involved cases of civil casuistry; but, speaking of mankind generally as alike depraved and unruly, and of governments as the creations of God's providence, they inculcate, without qualification, reservation, or restriction, the obvious and indispensable duties of submission, honour, and obedience.

"It has been, however, very much the fashion of late, to get rid of these unpleasant and '*degrading*' injunctions, by pleading the change of time and circumstances, and the difference between the laws and system of government under which we are privileged to live, and those of the apostolic days. Now, as to the general duty of obedience, it is obvious that it must apply rather *more* than *less* strongly to those who live under a paternal government, than to those who live under a tyrannical one. At the same time we are ready to allow, that the system of freedom which, in this country, gives to the people a share in the legislature, and an influence over the government, renders the submission due from them

* In order that the propriety of Mr. Hall's reply may be fairly estimated, it has been thought right to reprint the original article that called it forth.—Ed.

less *implicit* and *uninquiring,* at the same time that it increases the obligation to its cheerful payment.

"But, although it be conceded that, under a constitution which renders the people a party to their own government, it is lawful and proper for laymen to interest themselves intimately in political concerns, and even to a certain extent to participate in political contests,---there is one body of men whom we could ever wish to see taking no other part in these matters than as moderators, instructors, and peacemakers.

"The ministers of the gospel must, in the discharge of their duty,—they must, if they will '*declare the whole counsel* of God,' sometimes touch upon those passages of scripture which inculcate the *duties of subjects.* While St. Paul, in the days of Nero himself, was led by the Holy Spirit to write, 'Submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake;' and to pronounce, without hesitation, 'He that resisteth the power,' tyrannical as it was in the extreme, 'resisteth the ordinance of God;' and while similar passages abound in the inspired volume, it cannot be thought consistent with the character of a preacher of the gospel to maintain an absolute *silence* on these topics. But there is one rule which, in our opinion, ministers would do well to follow, and that is, to go no further than the Bible will carry them. The war of parties and factions, the continual struggle of political leaders, the various questions of constitutional casuistry, are subjects which lie beyond this boundary, and with which they would do well not to embroil themselves. The servant of the Lord is exhorted 'not to strive,' but 'to cut off occasion from them which desire occasion:' and assuredly he will find that the bare discharge of his plain duty in these things will expose him to sufficient obloquy and reproach.

"Entertaining this view of the subject, it is with sorrow that we observe the republication, under his own immediate sanction, of Mr. Hall's 'Apology for the Freedom of the Press.' This work was first given to the world about thirty

years ago, and has been long since forgotten, or remembered only as one of the sins of its author's youth. Since its disappearance, Mr. H. has so much better employed his time and his great talents, that he may now be considered as standing in the very first rank among the Nonconformists of the present day. And is it not a lamentable thing to see such a man stepping forward, in the ripeness of his years, and at the height of his well-earned reputation, to obtrude himself on the public in the degraded character of a violent party-scribe? And yet, in what other light can we consider the man who, in so uncalled-for and gratuitous a manner, and at so comparatively peaceful a period, sends into the world, with the sanction of his name and of his latest corrections, a new edition of such a pamphlet as this?

"He indeed states, as an excuse for the republication, that the term of copyright being expired, it was no longer in his power to prevent the reprinting of his work. The law, however, is not so; the power of perpetuating its oblivion lay still in his hands. But, had he even been correct on this point, where was the necessity for his being an active agent in this reappearance?

"To characterize the tract before us appropriately, we need only observe, that the principal topics discussed by this '*minister of the gospel*' are, the right of public discussion, the propriety of political associations, *parliamentary reform*, the rights of men, the character of dissenters, the present discontents. The work is extremely personal, and great bitterness is shown towards the late Bishop Horsley, Mr. Burke, and Mr. Pitt. We shall not imitate Mr. Hall's example, by entering into a discussion on the subject of Mr. Pitt's political character: but we should have hoped that the reflection of his undoubted integrity, and of that perfect devotion to his country, which led him to sacrifice even life itself in its service, might have spared him, at the distance of sixteen years from his death, a new volley of bitter reproach from one whose vocation is '*the gospel of peace.*'

"As to the character of Bishop Horsley, it is now placed far beyond the reach of his adversaries; and the christian world will know how to appreciate invectives against such a man, from one who is at the same time the eulogist of Priestley and Price, the Socinians, and of Mary Wolstonecraft, the female libertine and deist.

"Looking then upon this work, as one of which a critical analysis would be ill placed in the pages of the Christian Guardian, we shall conclude with a specimen or two of the political creed of Mr. Hall, and of the manner in which he supports it.

"He is then, as far as professed doctrine can make him, plainly and clearly a radical reformer. He pleads for 'annual parliaments,' for universal suffrage, for the unfettered publication of every kind of blasphemy, for the *exclusion* of the relatives of noblemen from the House of Commons, for the overthrow of all ecclesiastical establishments, and for 'the sovereignty of the people.' In what part of the sacred volume he has discovered the least sanction for any one of these notions, we are at a loss to imagine.

"In fact, the whole pamphlet is an argument in favour of the supremacy and infallibility of the people, and of the necessity of paying the most implicit obedience to the least expression of their will. Now, could these notions have been carried into practice at the time they were written (soon after the Birmingham riots), and could a legislature have been formed upon Mr. H.'s universal suffrage plan, the necessary and inevitable consequence would have been, that, as the feeling of the multitude ran violently against all the friends of the French revolution, Mr. H. and most of his fellow-labourers and admirers would have been silenced, banished, or hanged. So much for the *effects* which might be expected to follow Mr. Hall's plan. And as for the *principles* upon which that plan is founded, we find him broadly stating, in the latter end of this work, with admirable consistency, that 'calumny and reproach are usually the lot of distinguished virtue' and that '*the unpopularity of a cause*

is rather a presumption of its excellence.' Now, if the fact be so, it cannot be for the good of the people that this perpetually erroneous criterion should govern the affairs of the state.

"Mr. Hall concludes his prefixed advertisement, with the hope 'that the reader will recollect, as an excuse for the warmth of his expressions, that the work is an *eulogium on a dead friend;'* which is asserting, in other words, that the press is enslaved, and its liberty departed. And, having written this some years since, he now coolly republishes it, after witnessing the acquittals of Hone and Wooller, and while the wretched Carlile is braving every effort that can be made to stop the torrent of blasphemy which has so long issued from his warehouse.

"Again, Mr. H. assured us, thirty years since, that we had then '*at length arrived* at that crisis when nothing but speedy and effectual reform could save us from ruin.' Now, since the first publication of this prediction, we have maintained a contest of long duration with the greatest conqueror of modern times, and have fairly subdued him. We have immensely augmented the extent of our empire, and increased its ratio of population. We have tripled our commerce and our revenue. We have improved, it is to be hoped, the state of our internal population, by the establishment of schools and the increase of places of worship; and we have made some progress, in the commencement at least, of the great work of evangelizing the whole world.

"And after all this, Mr. Hall comes forward, with much admirable simplicity, to tell us of this wonderful prophecy of his, delivered only the third part of a century since, that without *immediate reform in parliament, ruin* was then *inevitable.* Now, it is certain, that this same *immediate reform* has not yet taken place, although one whole generation has passed away since the promulgation of this prediction. Has the dreadful alternative, then, fallen upon us? Have we been crushed by this *inevitable ruin?*

"The present comparatively prosperous and improving circumstances of the kingdom answers, No! to this question. The general state of the country, the average condition of the great mass of the people, is *better,* and not *worse,* than at the time when Mr. Hall first published this direful presage.

"If there be any exception to this state of general improvement, it is to be found in the depression of the agricultural interest of the country. But we are told, by those who ought to be judges, that the evils which threaten these classes have arisen from the want of sufficient legislative protection. And do we not know, from the conduct of the mobs of 1815, that a reformed parliament, a universal suffrage parliament, according to Mr. Hall's plan, would have withheld even the partial protection which has hitherto been granted, and would have thereby made, what is now distress and perplexity, absolute ruin and destruction? So much for the necessity and the effects of reform.

"It is with the most painful feelings that we are thus compelled to animadvert on this uncalled-for and altogether unnecessary republication. We repeat, that the general principle on which we disapprove of it is, that a minister of the gospel will always best consult the interests of his flock, and the dignity of his own character, by abstaining from any political discussion which transgresses the bounds prescribed in the Holy Scriptures. Mr. Hall has overstepped these limits, and has plunged into the thickest of the war of party politics. He has also chosen, we apprehend, the side which was generally found in most direct opposition to the scripture injunctions of peace, quietness, and obedience. And as the weight of his character, and the authority of his name, render error from his pen trebly dangerous, we have felt only the more imperatively called upon to enter our protest against the principles which he has endeavoured to lay down, and to unmask the sophistry of the arguments by which he has attempted to support them."

MR. HALL'S REPLY.

To the Editor of the Leicester Journal.

Sir,

A violent attack on my character having appeared in your paper a few weeks since, contained in an extract from a periodical work, entitled the *Christian Guardian*, I rely on your impartiality for permitting me to repel the accusation through the same medium. If the misrepresentations which I have to complain of had been confined within the bounds of decency, I should have consulted my ease by remaining silent: but the writer, whoever he is, has availed himself of the impunity attached to anonymous communications so unsparingly, that I might be justly charged, not only with a criminal indifference to character, but with being accessary to the delusion of the public, were I to make no reply.

The amount of my offence consists in uttering a new edition of a political pamphlet, which made its appearance many years since, and passed through several editions. This writer says, I might have suppressed it; but the contrary is the fact. The term of copyright is well known to extend to fourteen years, after which any one is at liberty to republish a work without the consent of the Author. More than that time had elapsed since the last edition, and as it was at the option of any bookseller to reprint it, so I was assured from various quarters, that, whether I consented or not, it would certainly be republished. The only alternative that remained was,

either to suffer it to come forth in a form, perhaps, most incorrect, and mingled with foreign infusions, or to publish it under my own eye, and with such alterations and corrections as the Author might deem proper. The latter was preferred, and for this a torrent of invective has issued from the *Christian Guardian.*

It certainly is very unusual for a writer to suppress his own publications, unless he has recanted the principles they contain. To persevere in doing so, naturally exposes him to the suspicion, either that he has renounced his former opinions, or that he is afraid to avow them: but neither of these situations is mine. I have changed no principle, and I feel no fear. Why, then, should I act in such a manner as must render me perpetually liable to either of these imputations? For a considerable time, indeed, after loud and repeated importunities, I declined a compliance with the wishes expressed for republication, from a sincere reluctance to engage in political controversy. By one party, in the mean while, it was my fortune to be so unequivocally claimed as a convert, and by the other so assailed with reproaches as an apostate, that I was convinced by experience there was no other way of putting an end to the misrepresentations of both, but to republish the original pamphlet. Had I never written it, the same motives which made me reluctant to reprint, might probably have prevented my writing it; but since there is not a principle in it which I can conscientiously retract, and my silence has occasioned numerous misrepresentations and mistakes, the fair and manly part was doubtless to republish it. An ingenuous mind is not less ashamed of receiving praises it is conscious it has not deserved, than indignant at reproaches which are not merited.

But a minister of the gospel, it seems, is on no occasion to meddle with party politics. How exactly this maxim was adhered to at the commencement of the late war, when military banners were consecrated, and the people every where summoned to arms

By pulpit drum ecclesiastic,
Beat with fist instead of a stick,

must be fresh in the recollection of my readers.

The men who, in the garb of clergymen, bustle at electioneering meetings, forsooth, are not really such, but merely assume the disguise of that holy order, since it would be uncandid to suppose they can so universally lose sight of what is befitting ministers of the gospel. The venerable bench of bishops, who sit in the House of Lords, either attend in silent pomp, without taking any part in the deliberations, or they violate the character of ministers of the gospel. We must have been grossly imposed upon by the public prints, which informed us of the clergy of a whole archdeaconry, or diocese, meeting to petition parliament against the catholic claims, since they could never, with one consent, depart so far from the decorum of ministers of the gospel!

The plain state of the case is, not that the writer is offended at my meddling with politics, but that I have meddled on the wrong side. Had the same mediocrity of talent been exerted in eulogizing the measures of ministers, his greetings would have been as loud as his invective is bitter. But it was exerted to expose public abuses, to urge the necessity of reform, and lay open the tergiversation of the heaven-born minister, and Sunday duellist, who, after devoting the day of rest to deeds of blood, has, by a strange fatality, obtained a sort of political beatification. *Hinc illæ lachrymæ!*

Another head of accusation is, that I have censured the character of Bishop Horsley, whose character, the Reviewer tells us, "is far removed beyond my attack, while I have eulogized Dr. Price and Dr. Priestley, Socinians." To this it is sufficient to reply, that Dr. Price was *not* a Socinian, but an Arian; he wrote professedly in confutation of socinianism; and though I disapprove of his religious principles, I feel no hesitation in affirming, in spite of the frantic and unprincipled abuse of Burke, that a more ardent and enlightened friend of his country never lived, than that venerable patriarch of

freedom. Such were the sentiments of the worshipful corporation of London, who in token of their esteem presented him with the freedom of the city in a golden box; such was the judgement of Mr. Pitt, who long professed himself his admirer, and condescended to seek his advice on questions of finance. Dr. Priestley, it is acknowledged, was a Socinian; but it was not under that character that he was eulogized. It was as the friend of liberty, the victim of intolerance, and the author of some of the most brilliant philosophical discoveries of modern times, for which he was celebrated throughout Europe, and his name enrolled as a member of the most illustrious institutions; so that my eulogy was but a mere feeble echo of the applause which resounded from every civilized portion of the globe. And are we suddenly fallen back into the darkness and ignorance of the middle ages, during which the spell of a stupid and unfeeling uniformity bound the nations in iron slumbers, that it has become a crime to praise a man for talents which the whole world admired, and for virtues which his enemies confessed, merely because his religious creed was erroneous? If any thing could sink orthodoxy into contempt, it would be its association with such gothic barbarity of sentiment, such reptile meanness. What renders the wretched bigotry of the Reviewer the more conspicuous, is, that the eulogy in question was written almost immediately after the Birmingham riots, that disgraceful ebullition of popular phrenzy, during which a ferocious mob tracked his steps like bloodhounds, demolished his house, destroyed his library and apparatus, and, advancing from thence to the destruction of private and public buildings, filled the whole town and vicinity with terror and dismay.

What sort of a *Christian Guardian* the Reviewer would have proved on that occasion, may be easily inferred from his passing over these atrocities in silence, while he discharges his malice on their unoffending victim.

The maxim, *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*, admits of ex-

ceptions; and as I am vilified for censuring Bishop Horsley, whose character, it is affirmed, "is far removed beyond my attack," while I praised Priestley, the Socinian, justice compels me to remark (what the Reviewer probably knows well enough) that in the virtues of private life, Dr. Priestley was as much superior to his antagonist, as he was inferior in the correctness of his speculative theology.

From the principles avowed in the *Apology*, this writer asserts, that it is evident I am to be classed to all intents and purposes with *radical reformers*. This charge is grounded on my recommendation of annual parliaments and universal suffrage. Now he either knows that Mr. Pitt, in conjunction with the Duke of Richmond, presided at public meetings, in which annual parliaments and the extension of the right of suffrage to all householders were recommended, or he does not. If he pleads ignorance of the fact, what presumption is it for a man so uninformed to write upon the subject! If he knows it, let me ask, was Mr. Pitt a *radical reformer* at the time he recommended those measures? If he was, I plead guilty to the charge; but if he was *not*, the recommendation of a similar plan is no evidence of my being a *radical*. For my own part, I feel the utmost contempt of the charge of radicalism. A radical reformer, if we attend to the import of words, is one that goes to the *root* of the evil, that proposes not merely to palliate, but to extirpate it. And what is that reform worth, that proposes less? He who labours under an inveterate malady, wishes for a *radical* cure: he would put little value on a remedy that should mitigate the pain, without reaching the source of the disorder. If the appellation of *radical reformer* is intended to denote a revolutionist, it is most absurdly applied to the advocate of annual parliaments and universal suffrage, because the first of these measures is merely a revival of the ancient practice, and the latter most consonant to the genius of a free constitution, which presupposes the extension of the elective franchise to all who can be presumed to have a will of their own: the exercise of this right, coupled with the

practice of voting by ballot, would, in my humble opinion, be the best expedient for securing the freedom and tranquillity of elections. Be this as it may, a sincere proposal of *reform* must differ essentially from the proposal of a revolution. If, by styling me a *radical* reformer, this writer intends to impute revolutionary views, I say it is a calumny and a falsehood; and I challenge him to produce a single sentence from my publications which sustains such a charge, or which convicts me of hostility to the existing order of things, as consisting of King, Lords, and Commons. But if he means, that I am for such a reform as will cut up corruption by the roots, I feel no inclination to disavow it. He wishes, it is evident, to fix the impression that I am hostile to the regal branch of the constitution; but shrinks from making the assertion, and endeavours to convey the venom of his accusations through the subtle vehicle of a dark and ambiguous phraseology.

For what purpose, but that of exciting hatred and horror, he has thought fit to couple my name with the mention of Hone and Carlile, it is not easy to conjecture. The blasphemy of their publications is quite as disgusting to me as to himself; but I am at a loss to conceive the justness of that reasoning which would infer that no political corruption, however enormous, no maladministration, however flagrant, must be exposed to animadversion, until these men have ceased to exhale their impieties. Let this principle once be admitted, and we shall never want Hones and Carliles in abundance: to remove a shield so easily purchased, and so effectual in the protection of every abuse, might be deemed an infatuation.

"He (the author of the Apology) pleads," says the Reviewer, "for annual parliaments, for universal suffrage, for the unfettered publication of every kind of blasphemy, for the exclusion of the relatives of noblemen from the House of Commons, for the overthrow of all ecclesiastical establishments, and for the sovereignty of the people. In what part of the sacred volume," he adds, "he has discovered the least sanction for any one

of these notions, we are at a loss to imagine." The fatuity of this remark baffles all description. For why may I not retort his own language, and say,—This author pleads for septennial parliaments, for limited suffrage, for the admission of the relatives of noblemen to the House of Commons, and for the support of ecclesiastical establishments; but in what part of the sacred volume he finds the least sanction for them, I am at a loss to imagine? But when did I plead for the publication of blasphemy, fettered or unfettered? To plead for the liberty of divulging speculative opinions is one thing, and to assert the right of uttering blasphemy is another. For blasphemy, which is the speaking contumeliously of God, is not a speculative error; it is an overt act; a crime which no state should tolerate. In relation to the question of ecclesiastical establishments, since I am challenged to produce any passage from Scripture which sanctions my opposition to them, I beg leave to refer him to our Lord's declaration: *Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted up.* That *national* churches, or exclusive establishments of religion by the civil magistrate, are one of these plants, will not be denied; since nothing of that kind, it is universally allowed, existed during the three first and purest ages of christianity, and not being authorised by the *great* Head of the church, it must, if we believe him, be rooted up. I have used the term *great* Head of the church, by way of distinction from that *little* head* which the church of England has invented, and on which, whether it be a beauty or a deformity in the body of Christ, the Scriptures are certainly as silent as on universal suffrage and annual parliaments.

It may not be improper in this place to notice a curious argument which the Reviewer adduces in support of his darling tenet of passive obedience and non-resist-

* A friend in conversation with Mr. Hall asked him whether, on cool meditation, he did not consider this allusion to the "little head" as a breach of taste? "Why (said he) I must confess it was better for a joke in the parlour, than to appear in print; but I never expected it would go beyond the columns of a newspaper."

ance, from the prevailing and inherent depravity of human nature. He reminds us that mankind are represented in scripture as "alike depraved and unruly;" and, from these premises, attempts to enforce that interpretation of scripture which would annihilate the liberties of mankind, and reduce them, without "restriction or reservation," to a passive submission to their political superiors. On another occasion I have sufficiently rescued the sentiments of the inspired writers from such a detestable imputation, by showing that their design is merely to inculcate the general duty of obedience to government, as the ordinance of God, while they leave the just bounds of authority, and the limits of obedience, to the regulation and adjustment of reason and experience; a task to which they are perfectly adequate. But how does the depravity of human nature evince the necessity of passive obedience and non-resistance, unless it is contended that the ruling part of mankind are *not* depraved? That mankind are naturally "depraved and unruly," affords a good argument for the existence of *Government itself;* but since they are "*alike* depraved and unruly," since governors partake of the same corruption as the people, aggravated too often by the possession of power, which inflames the passions and corrupts the heart, to allege the depravity of human nature as a reason for submission to arbitrary power, involves the absurdity of supposing that the cure of one degree of wickedness is to be obtained by affording an unlimited license to a greater. Retrace the annals of all times and nations, and you will find in the triumph of despotism the triumph of wickedness; you will find that men have been virtuous, noble, and disinterested, just in proportion as they have been free.

The Reviewer affects to triumph over me, on account of the supposed failure of the prediction, that ruin would speedily ensue, unless prevented by Reform. "Has this dreadful alternative," he asks, "fallen upon us? The present comparatively prosperous and improving circumstances of the kingdom answers, No. The general state of the country, the average condition of the great mass of the people, is *better* and not *worse*

than at the time when Mr. Hall first published this direful presage."

I am at a loss to reply in suitable terms to a writer who seems to glory in setting truth at defiance. Let me ask the reader, whether he thinks there is a single person to be found in the nation, who really believes our condition as a people is improved within the last thirty years? Where is this improvement to be found? Is it in the augmentation of the national debt to three times its former amount: in the accumulated weight of taxes; in the increase of the poor rates; in the depression of land to less than one-half of its former value; iu the ruin of the agricultural interest, in the thousands and tens of thousands of farmers who are distrained for rent, and they and their families reduced to beggary? Has this writer already forgotten the recent distress of the manufacturing class, who, from failure of employment, and the depression of wages, were plunged into despair, while numbers of them quitted their homes, and sought a precarious and scanty relief, by dragging through the country loaded wagons and carts, like beasts of burden? Is it in the rapid and portentous multiplication of crimes, by which our prisons are glutted with malefactors? If these are indications of increasing prosperity, we may justly adopt the language of the liturgy, from such prosperity "Good Lord, deliver us."

To do the writer justice, he has the grace to admit something like an exception respecting the agricultural interest, though he expresses himself with the diffidence becoming the solution of so difficult a problem. "If any exception," he says, "can be found, it is in the agricultural interest;" but he adds, "If those are to be believed *who ought to be judges*, this is to be ascribed to the want of legal protection." Now, two corn-bills have been passed of late years for the express protection of the agriculturist; the last of these in open contempt of the sentiments and wishes of the people. Previously to the passing of these bills, agriculture was in a comparatively flourishing state; since these laws were enacted it has experienced a depression beyond all

example; and, in the face of these facts, this writer has the assurance to inform us, that in the opinion of those *who ought to be judges*, the evil is wholly to be ascribed to the *want* of legal protection. But who are these highly privileged mortals, who are to be implicitly believed, because, "they ought to be judges?" If there is any class of persons whose opinion on these questions is entitled to deference and respect, they are undoubtedly political economists, men who have made the sources of national wealth the principal subject of their inquiry: and where will he find one, from Adam Smith to the present time, who has not reprobated the interference of legislature with the price of corn? To say nothing of the reasoning of that great philosopher, which is unanswerable, common sense will teach us, that laws to raise the price of produce, are unjust and oppressive taxes upon the whole community, for the exclusive benefit of a part. There is a description of men who are accustomed systematically, to yield up their understandings to others, who in their view "ought to be judges:" it is needless to add, that the present writer is evidently of this *servum pecus*, this tame and passive herd: and that his knowledge of the subject is just what might be expected from one who thinks by proxy. These men, forgetting, or affecting to forget, that the exercise of power, in whatever hands it is placed, will infallibly degenerate into tyranny, unless it is carefully watched, make it their whole business to screen its abuses; to suppress inquiry, stifle complaint, and inculcate on the people, as their duty, a quiet and implicit submission to the direction of those who, to speak in the vocabulary of slaves, "ought to be judges." These are the men by whom the constitution is endangered; these the maxims by which free states are enslaved. If that freedom which is the birth-right of Britons is destined to go down to succeeding generations, it must result from the prevalence of an opposite spirit; a lofty enthusiasm, an ardent attachment to liberty, and an incessant jealousy of the tendency of power to enlarge its pretensions and extend its encroachments.

The Reviewer asserts, that "my whole pamphlet is "an argument in favour of the supremacy and infallibility "of the people, and of the necessity of paying an "implicit obedience to the least expression of their "will."

This, I must assure the reader, is a gross and wilful misrepresentation. In no part of the pamphlet have I pleaded for any such doctrine. All that I have asserted is, that in proportion as the *House of Commons* is in unison with the people, animated by the same sympathies, and affected by the same interests, in the same proportion will it accomplish the design of its functions as a *representative* assembly; and that a reform is absolutely necessary, in order to restore it to that conjunction of interests and of feelings on which its utility, as the popular branch of the legislature, depends. The necessity of such an union between the people and their representatives, is manifest from the very meaning of the terms, for it were quite needless for them to be at the pains of choosing men, who, in consequence of a foreign bias, are prepared to contradict their sentiments, and neglect their interests. A House of Commons which should chiefly consist of court sycophants and tyrants, would exhibit nothing more than the mockery of representation. By artfully transferring what I have said of *one* branch of the legislature to the *whole*, and presenting even that in an exaggerated form, he has represented me as reducing the government to such an immediate and incessant dependence on the popular will, as never entered my thoughts, and would be utterly incompatible with the genius of a limited monarchy.

Having already trespassed on the patience of my readers, I shall close with one remark on the eulogium pronounced by the Reviewer on the character of the late Mr. Pitt. He appears to be extremely shocked with the freedom and severity of my strictures on his conduct, as implying, "a forgetfulness of his singular disinterestedness, and his perfect devotion to his country." As this has become a favourite topic with the admirers of that celebrated minister, it is necessary to remind

them, that there are other vices besides the love of money, and other virtues besides that of dying poor. It may be easily admitted, that the ambition which grasps at the direction of an empire, and the pitiful passion for accumulation, were not the inmates of the same bosom. In minds of a superior order, ambition, like Aaron's rod, is quite sufficient to swallow up the whole fry of petty propensities. Far be it from me to wish to withhold an atom of the praise justly due to him. That he devoted much time, and a considerable portion of talent, to the affairs of his country, is undeniable. The evils which he has brought upon us were not the production of an ordinary mind, nor the work of a day, nor done in sport; but what I contend for is, that, to say nothing of his unparalleled apostasy, his devotion to his country, and what was worse, its devotion to him, have been the source of more calamity to this nation than any other event that has befallen it; and that the memory of Pitt will be identified in the recollection of posterity with accumulated taxes, augmented debt, extended pauperism, a debasement and prostration of the public mind, and a system of policy not only hostile to the cause of liberty at home, but prompt and eager to detect and tread out every spark of liberty in Europe; in a word, with all those images of terror and destruction, which the name imports. The enthusiasm with which his character is regarded by a numerous class of his countrymen, will be ascribed, by a distant age, to that mysterious infatuation which, in the inscrutable counsels of Heaven, is the usual, the destined, precursor of the fall of states.

I am, Sir,

Your humble servant,

ROBERT HALL.

LEICESTER, *Feb.* 5, 1822.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

Some excellent persons, who did not know Mr. Hall, often express great concern that so good a man should have suffered his thoughts to be so much engrossed in politics, as they suppose must have been the case. The truth, however, is, that few men gave themselves less to political matters than he did. At the deeply interesting period in which he wrote his political tracts, the whole world was absorbed in the contemplation of political events, and the discussion of political principles. Among the disputants of the two great parties into which this country was divided, clergymen and other ministers took a most active part, and the class denominated Evangelical were by no means the least active. Some of the most eminent of them, indeed, engaged in that sad and then frequent profanation of holy places and things, the consecration of the colours of a volunteer corps in a parish church; and one even put on a military cockade, in order to incite his parishioners to come forward in the public cause. The genuine principles of our admirable constitution were thought by many to be in imminent peril; yet all who wrote in their defence were exposed to obloquy. A learned prelate asserted, in the House of Lords, that "the people had nothing to do with "the laws but to obey them," and his sentiment was loudly applauded. In a kindred spirit, during the trials of Muir and Palmer, for "leasing-making," or sedition, in Scotland, one of the Lords of Justiciary declared that "*no man had* "*a right to speak of the Constitution unless he possessed* "*landed property*;" and another affirmed that, "*since the* "*abolition of* TORTURE, *there was no adequate punishment for* "*sedition*." In such a season of violent excitement, when upright men of every shade of opinion thought the most valuable principles at stake, no wonder that heats and animosities prevailed, and that all expressed themselves

with vehemence, — often with acerbity. Mr. Hall, then under thirty years of age, was of too ardent and generous a spirit to be quiescent in that signal crisis of public affairs. He discharged what, in the exigency, appeared to him an imperious duty, and then remained silent, until, after an interval of many years, at the intreaty of his friends, he broke the silence in a brief effort of self-defence against anonymous misrepresentation. It was, indeed, his permanent conviction (see vol. V. p. 33.) "that the teachers of religion "are called to a nobler occupation, than to subserve the "interests of party, or fan the flames of public dissension." Nay, for some years, so great was his indifference to political concerns, that he scarcely ever read a newspaper, or did more in conversation than advert for a moment, if at all, to public measures. His political principles, however, remained the same through life; with those simple modifications which the lapse of time and the occurrence of new events, were calculated to produce in the breast of a considerate man. Though he thought them important, he uniformly regarded them as subordinate to others. He cherished with delight the anticipations of a new and better order of things amongst mankind; but he looked mainly for the realizing of his hopes to the operation of a higher class of principles than the politics of this world can supply, —principles of heavenly origin, which, flowing from religious Truth, and acting at once upon the spiritual part of our nature, change and improve the mass of society by transforming the characters of the men who compose it.

Some of the following pieces yield ample proofs of the prevalence of these sentiments.

That there are occasions on which pious men not only may, but must, if they act fully on scriptural principles, censure public men, and public measures, has been clearly shown by one of the gentlest as well as most excellent of men—GRANVILLE SHARPE—in his Essay on *"The Law of Passive Obedience."*

AN ADDRESS

TO THE PUBLIC,

ON AN IMPORTANT SUBJECT CONNECTED WITH

THE RENEWAL OF THE CHARTER

OF THE

EAST INDIA COMPANY.

[Published in 1813.]

AN ADDRESS.

As the subject of the renewal of the charter of the East India Company is shortly to come before parliament, with a view to a final decison, it is presumed that it will not be deemed impertinent to invite the attention of the legislature to a particular connected with that subject, which is judged of high importance. The point to which we refer, respects the propriety of inserting a clause in the new charter, authorizing the peaceable disseminating of christian principles in India.*. For

* The object for which Mr. Hall, and many other pious men, so earnestly pleaded, was accomplished, at least as to its practical results: though there is still room to interpose obstructions, if men in power should be inclined to present them. The act which passed in 1813, "for continuing in the East India Company for a farther term the possession of the British territories in India," contains four clauses (viz. 33, 34, 35, 36) which relate to "persons desirous of going to India for the purpose of promoting the religious and moral improvement of the natives." The nature of this part of the enactment will be understood from the subjoined brief official abstract:—

"If the Court of Directors think fit to refuse the applications for "permission made in behalf of such persons, they are to transmit the "applications to the Board of Commissioners, who, if they see no valid "objection to granting the permission, may authorize the said persons to "proceed to any of the Company's principal settlements, provided with a "certificate of sanction from the Directors. The Court of Directors, "however, may make representations concerning such persons to the "Board of Commissioners: and those persons on arriving in the "East Indies are to be subject to the regulations of the local governments. Further, the governments in India may declare the certificates "and licences of such persons to be void, if they shall appear by their "conduct to have forfeited their claims to protection."

Besides these clauses, there are others, from 49 to 54 inclusive, which relate to a "church establishment in India. A bishop and "three archdeacons to be appointed; their salaries are specified;

want of such a provision, the missionaries who have lately visited that country, have been under the necessity of going there by the circuitous route of America, besides meeting with considerable obstructions in their attempts to settle, and being exposed to much vexation and interruption in their quiet efforts to plant the christian faith. It must surely be considered as an extraordinary fact, that in a country under the government of a people professing christianity, *that* religion should be the only one that is discountenanced and suppressed.

That the most complete toleration should be extended to the various modes of belief prevailing in those remote dependencies of our empire, and that none of the inhabitants should be subjected to the slightest inconvenience on account of their adherence to the religious system of their forefathers, is readily admitted; nor would any event give more serious concern to the writer of this address, than an interference with that right of private judgment which he deems an inalienable prerogative of human nature. But, for a christian nation to give a decided preference to polytheism and idolatry, by prohibiting the dissemination of a purer faith, and thus employ its powers in suppressing the truth, and prolonging the existence of the most degrading and deplorable superstitions, is a line of conduct equally repugnant to the dictates of religion, and the maxims of sound policy. To oppose by force the propagation of revealed truth, from any worldly considerations whatever, is such a sacrifice of right to expediency, as can be justified on no principles but what will lead to the subversion of all morality and religion.

If christianity be a communication from heaven, to oppose its extension is *to fight against God;* an impiety which, under every possible combination of circumstances, must expect a severe rebuke; but the guilt of which is

"the episcopal jurisdiction is to be limited by letters patent from the "the king; pensions to be allowed after fifteen years' service." Of the bishops who have been appointed since the passing of this act, four, viz. *Middleton*, *Heber*, *James*, and *Turner*, have been already brought by the climate of India to a premature grave.—Ed.

inconceivably aggravated, when the opposition proceeds from the professors of that very religion. We have no example in the history of the world of such a conduct; we have no precedent of a people prohibiting the propagation of their own faith; a species of intolerance exposed not only to the objections which lie in common against all restraints upon conscience, but to a train of absurdities peculiar to itself; at the same time that it imposes a character of meanness on the ruling powers, by the virtual confession it includes, that they have either no religion, or a religion of which they are ashamed. As the equality of all religions, the distinguishing tenet of deism, is alike repugnant to the dictates of reason and the oracles of truth, so it is ill calculated to conciliate the esteem of eastern nations, on whom it can have no other effect than to desecrate the British name, by depriving it of the veneration which nature, unsophisticated by impiety, has inseparably connected with sentiments of religious belief. Powerfully impressed as they are with religious principles and prejudices, however erroneous, we can scarcely adopt a more effectual expedient for securing their contempt and abhorrence than an avowed indifference to whatever concerns that momentous subject.

It is an undeniable fact, that no persons have been so popular in India, as the men who have exerted themselves with the most steady and persevering zeal in the dissemination of christian principles; of which we have a striking example in the excellent Schwartz, for many years a missionary on the coast of Coromandel, who, by his wise and benevolent conduct, rendered, on various occasions, the most essential service to the British interests, and became the object of the enthusiastic attachment of the natives.*

The attempt to propagate christianity in India is not a new experiment; it has been now tried for more than a century: it received the warmest support of George

* See the Reports of the Society at Bartlett's Buildings, (now Lincoln's Inn Fields,) for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

the First, of illustrious memory, as well as of the then Archbishop of Canterbury; and in the hands of Ziegenbalgius and his successors, was crowned with distinguished success.* Similar attempts have been more recently made in Bengal, and the adjacent provinces; and several christian societies have been planted by the labours of missionaries in those parts of India. It deserves particular attention that no inconvenience, not even the slightest, has arisen from these enterprises; and that whatever agitation has been witnessed among the natives at different times, the propagation of christianity has never been the cause, or even the pretext. When intelligence of the insurrection of Vellore reached England, there were not wanting persons who endeavoured to ascribe it to the jealousy and uneasiness excited by the efforts of missionaries; but no attempt could be more unsuccessful, since, in the course of a most accurate investigation of the circumstances connected with that event, we have it, on the authority of Lord Teignmouth, that not even the name of a missionary was mentioned. It arose from causes totally distinct. Thus have we the experience of more than a century to justify the conclusion, that nothing is to be feared for the tranquillity of India from the operations of missionaries, subject, as they must ever be, to the control of the constituted authorities.

The number of natives who profess christianity is not small nor inconsiderable. The disciples of Schwartz and his successors on the eastern side of the peninsula amount to fifty thousand; and the Syrian christians, on the coast of Malabar, to several hundred thousands; the greater part of them converted from the Bramins, and the higher classes. They have subsisted there from the fifth century, are in possession of one hundred and nineteen churches, some of them sumptuous and splendid edifices; and their superior elevation of character, and purity of manners are attested, on the most respectable

* See the excellent Letters from his Majesty and the Archbishop, addressed to Ziegenbalgius, in Buchanan's Ecclesiastical Researches.

authority, to be such as the possession of the christian faith might be expected to inspire.* In addition to this, translations of the New Testament, in almost all the vernacular dialects of India, have been recently circulated, and a considerable number of the natives are assiduously and constantly employed in preaching the gospel; so that it is too late to think of checking its career: the possession it has taken of the public mind will necessarily render all such attempts impracticable. The only question which remains to be decided is, whether its further propagation shall be left solely in the hands of natives, or whether intelligent and respectable Europeans who come more immediately into contact with the British Government, and in whose prudence and experience greater confidence may be reposed, shall be allowed to superintend its movements. The good seed having struck its root too deep ever to be extirpated, the only alternative is, either to leave it to its spontaneous growth, aided by the labour of Hindoos, or to place it under a more skilful and enlightened cultivation.

Though strangers to the theory, the inhabitants of Hindostan have been long familiarized to the practice of toleration. In no part of the world is there a greater variety of sects, or more contrariety in the modes of religious belief, subsisting without the slightest disturbance; even the grand division of the natives into Hindoos and Mahometans has continued for ages, without interruption to the public harmony.

But if nothing is to be feared from the dissemination of christian principles in India, the advantages resulting from it, whether we consult the interest of the natives, or our own, are too obvious to require to be enumerated, and too important to be overlooked. With respect to its aspect on the natives, will it be contended that a more powerful instrument can be devised for meliorating and raising their character, than grafting upon it the principles of our holy religion, which, wherever it prevails,

* See the interesting narrative of Dr. Buchanan's visit to the Syrian christians, in his Ecclesiastical Researches.

never fails to perfect whatever is good, and to correct whatever is evil, in the human constitution, and to which Europe is chiefly indebted for those enlightened views, and that high sense of probity and honour, which distinguish it so advantageously in a comparison with Asiatic nations? The prevalence of christianity every where marks the boundary which separates the civilized from the barbarous or semi-barbarous parts of the world; let but this boundary be extended, and the country included within its limits may be considered as redeemed from the waste, and prepared to receive the precious seeds of civilization and improvement. Independently of eternal prospects, it may be safely affirmed that polytheism and idolatry draw after them such a train of absurd and dismal consequences, as to be quite incompatible with the due expansion of the human intellect, and necessarily to prevent the operations of reason from reaching their maturity and perfection. Wherever christianity prevails, mankind are uniformly progressive; it communicates that just manner of thinking upon the most important subjects, which, extending its influence thence to every department of speculative and moral truth, inspires a freedom of inquiry, and an elevation of sentiment, which raise the disciples of revelation immeasurably above the level of unassisted nature.

The Hindoo superstition is characterized by a puerile extravagance of conception, as hostile to the cultivation of reason, as the enormity of its practices is revolting to humanity. It oppresses the former by its gigantic absurdities; it extinguishes the latter by the cruelty of its rites. The annual destruction of female infants in Guzerat and Kutch is estimated at fifteen or twenty thousand.* Till lately, it had been the custom, from time immemorial, to immolate at the island of Saugor, and at other places esteemed holy, on the banks of the Ganges, human victims, or to destroy them by sharks. From a late investigation, it appears that the number of women who sacrifice themselves on the funeral pile of

* See Moore's Hindoo Infanticide.

their husbands, within thirty miles of Calcutta, is, on an average, upwards of two hundred annually.* A multitude of courtezans are uniformly attached to the principal temples, and the most obscene symbols exhibited to inflame the passions of their votaries.†

While the history of all times and nations evinces the inseparable alliance of impurity and cruelty with the worship of idols, is it consistent with the dictates of humanity, not merely to witness these enormities without attempting to correct them, but to oppose the communication of the only remedy which is capable of effecting a cure?

The base venality, together with the spirit of artifice and intrigue, which distinguishes the natives of Hindostan, have rendered it the theatre of perpetual revolutions, robbed its native governments of every principle of stability, and rendered poisonings, assassinations, and treachery, expedients so constantly resorted to by the parties in conflict, that it is impossible to peruse its history without shuddering. To affirm that there is nothing in their superstitions calculated to correct these vices, is saying little, when, in fact, they derive a powerful sanction from the maxims of their religion, and from the character of their gods. There is not one of their deities portrayed in their Shasters whose moral character is tolerably correct. How much christianity is wanted to exalt the sentiments, and purify the principles, of this corrupt and effeminate race, is too obvious to need to be insisted on.

That their conversion is practicable, is ascertained beyond controversy by the success which has already attended the experiment; that no apprehensions are to be entertained for the permanence of British power, in consequence of the attempt, is manifest from experience; that to consult the welfare of the subject is the first duty of the sovereign, and the chief distinction betwixt the

* See Buchanan's Memoir, p. 96, Appendix. In a letter lately received from Dr. Carey, he estimates the whole number of women annually sacrificed throughout India at ten thousand.

† See Sonerat's Voyage aux Indes et à la Chine, p. 219.

exercise of legitimate authority and the operation of lawless tyranny, will not be disputed in an enlightened age; and that the christian religion is the greatest blessing we have received, the most precious boon we can bestow, none but infidels will deny. It surely will not be asserted, that we are under less obligation to communicate a good, because that good may be traced to the immediate interposition of Heaven, or because it contains the seed and germ of eternal felicity. He who believes the Bible, must know that the heathen are to be given to Christ for his inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession; and that therefore to *forbid his being preached to the Gentiles that they may be saved*, is an attempt to contravene the purposes of the Most High, equally impotent and presumptuous. *Let the potsherds strive against the potsherds of the earth, but woe unto him who striveth with his Maker.* Such conduct, persevered in, must infallibly draw down the judgements of God on the people to whose infatuated counsels it is to be ascribed. Whoever considers the aspect of the times, must be invincibly prejudiced not to discern the symptoms of a peculiar crisis, the distinguishing features of which are, the rapid subversion of human institutions, and the advancement of the kingdom of God. *The stone cut out without hands has already fallen upon the image, and made it like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor:* the next event we are to look for in the order of Providence, is its enlarging itself, *till it becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth.* If there ever was a period when the propagation of the true religion might be resisted with impunity, that period is past; and the Master of the universe is now addressing the greatest potentates in the language of an ancient oracle:—*Be wise now, ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth.* Encompassed as we are with the awful tokens of a presiding and avenging Providence, dissolving the fabrics of human wisdom, extinguishing the most ancient dynasties, and tearing up kingdoms by their roots, it would be the height of infatuation any longer to oppose the reign of God, whose purposes will pursue their career, in spite of

the efforts of human policy, which must either yield their cooperation, or be broken by its force.

All that is desired, on this occasion, is simply that the Word of God may be permitted to have free course. Whether it be consistent with sound policy for the British government to employ any part of its resources in aid of the cause of christianity in India, is a question which it is not necessary to discuss, while its friends confine their views to a simple toleration, and request merely that its teachers may not be harassed or impeded in their attempts to communicate instruction to the natives. Before such a liberty can be withheld, the principles of toleration must be abandoned; nor will it be practicable to withhold it without exciting a sanguinary persecution, where men are to be found who will eagerly embrace the crown of martyrdom, rather than relinquish the performance of what appears to them a high and awful duty. And what a spectacle will it exhibit, for a christian government to employ force in the *support* of idolatry, and the *suppression* of truth!

Instead of dwelling on the necessary effects of such a measure, let us consider for a moment the beneficial consequences likely to result from an opposite mode of conduct. On that improvement of character which the cordial reception of revealed truth cannot fail to operate, it will be easy to graft some of the best habits and institutions of European nations, advancing gradually through an interminable series of social order and happiness. Under the fostering hand of religion, reason will develope her resources, and philosophy mature her fruits. Nor will the advantages accruing to the British interests, from a change so salutary, be less certain, or less important. The possession of the same faith will occasion such an approximation of the habits and sentiments of the natives to our own, as will render the union firm, by rendering it cordial. While a total opposition in their views on the most important points subsists betwixt the sovereign and the subjects;—while objects adored by the one are held in contempt and

abhorrence by the other; they may be artificially connected, but it is impossible they should be united: it is rather a juxta-position of inanimate parts, than a union of minds. In such a situation the social tie wants that cementing principle which is requisite to give it strength and stability: it is a strained and unnatural position, in which things are held contrary to their native bent; in which authority is upheld merely by force, without deriving support from that sympathy of congenial sentiment which forms its truest basis. Hence the precarious tenure by which European states have successively held dominion in India, where all has been submitted to the arbitration of the sword; where the moment force has been withdrawn or relaxed, authority has ceased, and each, in its turn, has gained a transient ascendancy, none a firm and tranquil possession.

In order to obviate the mischiefs arising from such a state of things, it is extremely desirable, providing it be practicable, to impart to our subjects in the East some principle which shall draw them into closer contact with the ruling power; and what principle equally operative and efficient with the possession of a common religion? Though the universal diffusion of christianity over India will probably be a work of time, its influence in strengthening the social compact, by augmenting the attachment of the natives, will be uniformly progressive; and while external tranquillity is secured, by the superiority of our policy and our arms, we shall every year be making our way into their hearts: we shall be establishing an interior dominion, and may confidently reckon on the unshaken fidelity of every christian convert. This is not mere conjecture: for in all the trying vicissitudes experienced by the British interests in India, the Hindoo christians have invariably approved themselves our firmest friends and abettors.

Though the writer of this address is afraid of being tedious, there is another consideration connected with the present subject, which he deems of too much importance not to be mentioned. The possession of India, it is well known, is an object to which our enemies are

looking with eager desire, accompanied with jealousy at that splendour which the vastness of our oriental empire confers on the British name and character. No efforts will they deem too great, no sacrifices too expensive, to rob us of so bright a jewel. What events may arise hereafter to facilitate the accomplishment of their wishes, it is beyond the power of human sagacity to conjecture: one thing is certain, that nothing will oppose a more formidable obstacle to their designs than the diffusion of christianity. They who have received that inestimable blessing, will infallibly cling with ardour to the people to whom they are indebted for it. They will feel more than a natural affection to the country which has opened to them the prospect of immortality, and nourished them with the bread of life. In all the struggles to retain or to acquire dominion in the East, the christian portion of the population will, to a man, be the zealous partizans of Great Britain; a firm and immoveable band, whose devoted attachment will in some measure compensate for their inferiority of number. In this species of policy, too, in this most unexceptionable mode of conciliating esteem, we shall have nothing to apprehend from the intrigues of our rivals, who are equally indisposed and disqualified to engage in such an enterprise.

If we consider what may be the probable intention of Providence in opening so extensive a communication betwixt Europe and the most ancient seats of idolatry, and more especially of subjecting such immense territories in the East to the British arms, we can conceive no end more worthy of the Deity in these momentous changes, than to facilitate the propagation of true religion.

Our acquisition of power there has been so rapid, so extensive, and so disproportioned to the limits of our native empire, that there are few events in which the interposition of Providence may be more distinctly traced. From the possession of a few forts in different parts of the coast, which we were permitted to erect for the protection of our commerce, we have risen, in the course of less than half a century, to a summit of power, whence we exert a direct dominion over fifty millions, and a

paramount influence over a hundred millions of men. By an astonishing train of events, a large portion of the population of the oriental world has been subjected to the control of an island placed in the extremities of the west of Europe. Kingdoms have fallen after kingdoms, and provinces after provinces, with a rapidity which resembles the incidents of a romance, rather than the accustomed order of political events. It is remarkable, too, that this career of conquest has uniformly directed its steps towards those parts of the earth, and to those only, which are the primeval seats of pagan idolatry; forming an intimate connexion betwixt the most enlightened of christian nations, and the victims of the most inveterate and deplorable system of superstition mankind have ever witnessed. As we must be blind not to discern the finger of God in these transactions, it behoves us to consider for what purposes we are lifted to so high a pre-eminence.

It is certainly not to be ascribed to a blind predilection, which aims at no other object than to gratify ambition, by extending the power, and augmenting the grandeur of Great Britain; a motive too puerile to satisfy the requisitions of human reason, much more to limit the views of an eternal mind.

The possession of sovereignty over extensive kingdoms is a sacred trust, for which nations are not less responsible than individuals, a delegation from the supreme fountain of power; and as the unalterable laws of nature forbid us to confound men with things, or to forget the reciprocal obligations subsisting betwixt the sovereign and the subject, we can scarcely be guilty of a greater crime than to consider the latter as merely subservient to the interests of the former. Every individual of the immense population subjected to our sway, has claims on our justice and benevolence which we cannot with impunity neglect: the wants and sufferings of every individual utter a voice which goes to the heart of humanity. In return for their allegiance we owe them protection and instruction, together with every effort to meliorate their condition and improve their character. It is but

fair to acknowledge that we have not been wholly insensible to these claims, and that the extension of our power has been hitherto highly beneficial. But why, in the series of improvements, has christianity been neglected? Why has the communication of the greatest good we have to bestow been hitherto fettered and restrained; and while every modification of idolatry, not excepting the bloody and obscene orgies of Juggernaut, has received support, has every attempt to instruct the natives in the things which belong to their peace been suppressed? It will surely appear surprising to posterity, that a nation, glorying in the purity of its faith as its highest distinction, should suffer its transactions in the East to be characterized by a spirit of infidelity, as though it were imagined the foundations of empire could be laid only in apostasy and impiety; at a moment, too, when Europe, convulsed to its centre, beholds these frantic erections swept with the besom of destruction. Their astonishment will be the more excited, when they compare our conduct in this instance with the unprecedented exertions we are making for the diffusion of religious knowledge in other directions; with the operations of the Bible Society, which, formed for the sole purpose of conveying the oracles of God to all quarters, has risen to an importance that entitles it to be regarded as a national concern; in which statesmen, nobles, and prelates, have enrolled their names, emulous of the honour of advancing to the utmost the noble design of the institution; with the Bartlett's Buildings Society, employed for upwards of a century in attempts to convert the natives of Hindostan, which includes in the list of its members every bishop, and every dignified ecclesiastic in the realm; with the numerous translations going on in all the dialects of the East, to which the learned, both in Europe and in Asia, are looking with eager expectation. When posterity shall compare the conduct we are reprobating, with these facts, how great their astonishment to find the piety of the nation has suffered itself to lie prostrate at the feet of a few individuals, the open or disguised enemies of the faith of Jesus!

It is impossible, in connexion with the circumstances to which we have adverted, to mistake the real sentiments of the British people, or not to perceive that the illustrious associations already mentioned are entitled, on a question of this nature, to be considered as its genuine and legitimate organ.

It ought never to be forgotten, in the consideration of this subject, that it is inseparably connected with liberty of conscience. Religious toleration implies not merely the freedom of thought, which no human power can restrain, and which equally subsists under the most tyrannical and the most enlightened governments; it comprehends, also, the freedom of communication, and the right of discussion, within the limits of sober and dispassionate argument. He who is impressed with a conviction of the importance of the Christian verities, it is reasonable to suppose, will be anxious to communicate them: he will probably feel as St. Paul did in a similar situation, whose spirit was stirred within him when he beheld Athens wholly given up to idolatry: he may be touched with so strong a commiseration for the victims of religious imposture, and so powerful a sense of the duty of attempting to correct it, as to be ready to adopt the language employed on another occasion:—" We *cannot* but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

None but the determined enemy of truth and decency will deny that such a state of mind is possible, or that it is more allied to virtue than to vice. If, at this juncture, a superior power interposes, and says, You shall not impart your conviction, however strong; you shall not attempt to dispel delusions the most gross, or correct enormities the most flagrant, though no other means are thought of but calm expostulation and argument; in what, I would ask, does such an interference differ from persecution? Here is conscience on one side, an enlightened conscience, as all christians must confess, and force on the other; which is precisely the position in which things are placed by every instance of persecution. If christianity was ever persecuted; if the martyrologies of all times and nations are not to be exploded as mere fic-

tion and romance; this is persecution, and persecution of a most portentous character, being directed, in support of a system we detest, against the religion by which we expect to be saved. Here are a people, indignant posterity will exclaim, who profess subjection to the Saviour of the world, and hold in their hands the oracles which foretell the universal extension of his dominion, who yet make it a crime to breathe his name in pagan lands, and employ their power to fence out the scene of his future triumphs, and render it, as far as possible, inaccessible to his religion. With what efficacious sincerity, and edifying fervour, must this people have prayed, "Thy kingdom come!" Admirable successors of the Constantines and the Charlemagnes of a former age! Faithful stewards of the manifold gifts of God!

When the parallel betwixt the conduct of modern missionaries and the first preachers of the gospel is insisted on, it is usual to attempt to annul the conclusion deduced from the comparison, by remarking that the latter were possessed of miraculous powers, to which the former have no pretensions. That this circumstance occasions a real disparity in the means of ensuring success, will be readily acknowledged; but that it makes any difference whatever in the right of imparting instruction, will not hastily be conceded. Had such supernatural interpositions never accompanied the publication of the gospel, it had wanted its credentials, and been essentially defective in the proof of its divine origination. It was necessary for a new dispensation, when first ushered into the world, to be accompanied with a direct appeal to the senses, with the visible signatures of a divine hand; and it is the glory of our holy religion to have possessed them in a variety and splendour that astonished mankind, and laid a foundation for the faith and obedience of all succeeding ages. At its *entrance*, such an economy was requisite to prepare the way. But when these miraculous occurrences, after enduring the severest scrutiny, under circumstances the most favourable to investigation, were committed to writing, and formed a compact body of external evidences; when the super-

natural origin of the christian faith had taken its place amongst the most indubitable of recorded facts, it was no longer necessary to be continually repeating the same proofs; nor consistent with the majesty of heaven to be ever laying the foundation afresh. It was time to assume the truth of religion as a thing proved.

As we were none of us eye-witnesses of the miracles wrought in the primitive ages, but rest our belief on historical documents, it is not impossible, as far as the truth of christianity is concerned, to lay open to pagans the sources of our conviction, and by that means to place them in nearly the same situation with ourselves; to say nothing of that internal evidence which *commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.* This is actually the mode in which the light of Revelation has been chiefly diffused since the cessation of miraculous gifts; which, in the opinion of some, terminated with the apostles, in the judgement of others, were continued through the first three centuries, but are universally allowed to have ceased long before the conversion of the northern and western parts of Europe. Did the disciples of St. Columba, who spread christianity through the German provinces on the Baltic, through the kingdoms of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, owe their success to miraculous powers? Did St. Austin and his associates, who laid the foundations of the religious establishments in England, make such pretensions?

To demand miracles in order to justify the propagation of christianity in pagan countries, is to attribute to it a state of perpetual weakness and pupilage: it is to cancel all that is past, to accuse the most illustrious missionaries of enthusiasm, and the faith of our forefathers of folly and credulity. The principle we are attempting to expose, not content with inflicting a stigma on a particular sect or party, involves the whole christian community established in these realms, in the foul reproach of being the illegitimate offspring of fanaticism or imposture. It is only necessary for us to place ourselves in imagination at that period when the foundation of the church was laid in this and other European countries, to

perceive that the same objections which are made to the present efforts of missionaries, apply with equal force to those that are past. They who first exhibited the mystery of the cross to the view of our rude ancestors, were equally destitute of miraculous powers with ourselves. But they felt the power of the world to come; they were deeply impressed with the dignity and excellence of the christian dispensation, and touched with a passionate regard for the honour of God and the salvation of souls. These were the motives which impelled them forward; these the weapons of their warfare. The ridicule attempted to be poured on men of the same principles and character, engaged in the same object, is, in fact, reflected on these their predecessors, and is precisely a repetition of the conduct of the impenitent Jews, who honoured the memory and built the sepulchres of departed, while they were imbruing their hands in the blood of living prophets. We collect, with eager veneration, the names and achievements of the first heralds of the gospel; we dwell with exultation on the heroic fortitude they displayed in encountering the opposition of fierce barbarians, amidst their efforts to reclaim them from a sanguinary superstition, and to imbue their minds with the principles of an enlightened piety. We look up to them as to a superior order of beings, and in the character of the instructors of mankind in the sublimest lessons, entitled to a distinction above all Greek, above all Roman fame; yet, with ineffable absurdity, and a most contemptible littleness of mind, if it please Providence, at distant intervals, to raise up a few congenial spirits, we are prepared to treat them with levity and scorn. It is the misfortune of some men to labour under an incapacity of discerning living worth;—a sort of moral virtuosi, who form their estimate of characters, as the antiquarian of coins, by the rust of antiquity.

> "Urit enim fulgore suo, qui prægravat artes
> Infra se positas: extinctus amabitur idem."—HORACE.

I would not be understood, in the remarks made on this part of the subject, to explode the expectation of

the renewal of miraculous agency; which some of the most able divines have unquestionably formed, from a perusal of the prophetic oracles. The inference I would wish to establish is simply this, that we are not justified in neglecting the means of propagating the truth we already possess, by the absence of higher succour; and that it would ill become the christian world to abandon the attempts to convert the inhabitants of pagan countries, in deference to the clamours of men, who demand miracles merely because they believe they will not be vouchsafed, and decry the ordinary methods of procedure, because they are within our reach, and have already been crowned with success. To such the language of the prophet Amos may be addressed with propriety:—*Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light.*—Chap. v. 18.

AN

APPEAL TO THE PUBLIC,

ON THE SUBJECT OF

THE FRAME-WORK KNITTERS' FUND.

[Published in 1819.]

ADVERTISEMENT.

Impressed as the writer of these pages has long been with the critical state of the stocking manufactory, and the intolerable evils resulting from a progressive depression of wages, he could not refrain from communicating his sentiments on this most interesting subject. He is aware of his inability to discuss it with that precision and force which superior talents might command. His only apology is, that he has *done what he could.* His reason for suppressing his name, is simply, that while it might possibly create prejudice in some quarters, he is not aware that it would bestow additional weight in any.

AN APPEAL.

It is with the highest satisfaction I perceive that the wretched state of the labouring mechanics in Leicestershire has at length arrested the attention, and drawn forth the liberality of a discerning public. But while we rejoice to see such a feeling awakened, we must be permitted to express our surprise and concern at the very scanty and penurious contribution it has hitherto produced. After witnessing such an unexampled depression in the remuneration of labour as to place the means of subsistence totally out of the reach of the industrious poor, when the only alternative presented, is that of effective aid afforded by the more opulent, or the total ruin and extinction of the labouring classes, it was natural to expect that the extent and magnitude of the exertion would bear some proportion to the greatness of the object, and the exigence of the case. That this expectation is, as yet, far from being realized, requires no proof; nor will it be possible to prevent the recurrence of that intolerable state of suffering which we have recently witnessed, without more extensive and vigorous efforts.

It is frequently asserted, we are aware, that the rate of wages, like every other article, should be left to find its own level, and that all attempts at artificial regulation, either by voluntary association, or legal enactment, is repugnant to the true principles of political economy. That commerce ought to be left to its native operation, to a much greater extent than it is, we have learned from the highest authority; nor is it proposed to implore the interference of legislature in aid of our present object. But there is a peculiarity in the case of manual

labour to which we suspect the persons who urge this objection have not attended.

When the price of a particular commodity sinks so low as not to produce the ordinary profits of stock, a part or the whole of the capital is withdrawn; a less quantity is produced in proportion to the diminution of the demand, in consequence of which, the price rises to its former level. Thus the irregularity corrects itself, and little or no permanent mischief ensues. But the situation of the labourer is widely different; he has no other article to dispose of besides his personal industry and skill, on which he depends for his subsistence from day to day, nor can he, without being reduced to immediate distress, withhold them from the market, or even diminish their exertion to any considerable degree. The only commodity he has to part with is of such a nature, that it will not permit him to adjust the supply to the demand. He must instantly offer it to sale at whatever price it will fetch, or suffer all the agonies of want. Hence this is the kind of property of all others the most defenceless, and which most needs protection. That the rate of wages has a tendency to keep pace with the price of the necessaries of life is undeniable, but from the cause we have now mentioned it is long before that tendency becomes effective; the labourer and the mechanic are the *last* who experience the beneficial effect of an elevation in prices.

But, admitting the objection to which we have adverted to be more weighty than it is, where is the equity of urging it in opposition to the claims of the labouring classes, while it is treated with the utmost neglect on other occasions? What is the object, let me ask, of the laws for the regulation of trade, which form so large a part of our acts of parliament, but to secure to certain descriptions of the community a higher price for the respective commodities which they produce, and thus to direct the application of capital to a specific object? What is the design, the avowed object at least, of the corn bill, but to encourage agriculture, by securing a higher price for its productions than they could com-

mand, were they exposed to the effects of foreign competition? What is the design of the additional duty lately imposed on foreign wool, but to bestow an artificial elevation on the price of that article, as a means of promoting its domestic growth? and why so extensive a list of prohibitory statutes, except they are intended to encourage our home manufactures, by securing to them a higher price? Not to multiply words on so plain a subject, suffice it to remark that all laws and regulations of the legislature respecting trade and agriculture, with the exception of such as immediately relate to revenue, have for their immediate object the modification of price; it is by that means, and that alone, that they furnish encouragement to that species of productive industry, which it is deemed expedient to favour. Hence it is evident that the vaunted maxim of leaving every kind of production and labour to find its own level is not adhered to; that it has always been violated in this country, from the remotest times. An adherence to it would create a total revolution in our mercantile system, and while it is trampled under foot every day, it just commands a sufficient degree of theoretic assent, to render it, in the hands of the artful and designing, a *bugbear* to deter the humane from rendering effectual assistance to the distressed and laborious part of the community. But what, let me once more ask, what reason can be assigned for leaving this class unprotected, the most helpless in society, from the cause already specified, while the agricultural, the manufacturing, and the mercantile interests, are shielded, with jealous attention, by a multitude of legal provisions?

Why a philosophical theory, which is violated with impunity every moment, should then only be deemed sacred when it stands opposed to the claims of a starving and industrious population we are at a loss to conjecture. Let it be remembered, however, that an application to the legislature forms no part of the present plan; although, if every other expedient should fail, we see no reason why its aid should not be exerted in favour of the Leicestershire frame-work knitters, as well as of the

Spitalfields weavers, who were, a few years ago, effectually relieved by the establishment of a *minimum*,* with the entire approbation of the principal manufacturers. The excellent Mr. Wilberforce had a principal share in procuring that regulation; nor is it to be doubted, that, in conjunction with other humane and enlightened senators, he would be ready to exert, if necessary, the same efforts for the mitigation of similar distress.

The measure now intended is of a less bold and hazardous character. It is proposed simply by means of voluntary contribution to afford a subsistence, scanty it will probably be at the best, to that portion of the labouring class who are destitute of employment, that they may not be compelled to offer their labour for next to nothing, and thus reduce the general rate of wages to that scale of depression which has been already productive of such calamitous effects. On the present system, those who are thrown out of employment are tempted to offer their services for a remuneration totally inadequate to their wants. But a material inequality of wages for the same quantity of work is unnatural, and therefore cannot be permanent; the consequence is, that the wages of all the workmen are soon reduced to the rate at which the first hands are engaged. Thus a small surplus of labour, beyond what the state of the demand requires, becomes an engine for effecting a deep and universal depression; and the misery of a few, instead of exciting an effort for their relief, becomes the signal for a more extended infliction of the same calamity. To this evil no conceivable remedy, short of legislative interference, can be applied, except the creation of a fund capable of supplying the more pressing necessities of those whom the vicissitudes of trade may deprive of employment. This is the only expedient that furnishes the faintest prospect of giving permanence and stability to the statement to which the principal manufacturers have agreed; and on the vigour with which it is carried into effect depends our only chance of obviating the recurrence, with

* The *lowest* rate at which labour should be paid for.

fresh aggravation, of the distress we have lately witnessed.

The benefits resulting from the successful operation of the measure we are recommending will not be confined to its immediate objects, it will extend its influence to every class of the community; and the alleviation which it will afford to the almost insupportable burthen of the poor-rates will be of eminent advantage to the parishes. Suppose in a particular parish a hundred frames at work, and each of the frame-work knitters earns, clear of all deductions, ten shillings a week instead of six, that parish is benefited to the amount of a thousand pounds; and, considering the utter inadequacy of the former wages to procure the necessaries of life, the alteration will be nearly equivalent to an *annual* donation of a thousand pounds to the parochial treasure. That it is the interest of the manufacturing villages to exert themselves to the utmost in perpetuating the present statement, is an inference which must force itself on the attention of the most careless observer; and nothing but the most infatuated preference of the present to the future, can prevent them from giving to the fund a liberal support. Tradesmen of every description are deeply interested in the success of the present measure, since the permanent rise of wages will increase the power of purchase, and give a new impulse to every species of trade. Supposing the number engaged in all the various departments of the stocking manufactory to amount to thirty thousand, no extravagant computation, and little less than three hundred thousand pounds, in addition to the present sum, will annually find its way into the market; the agriculturist will find his account in the increased demand for raw produce, the manufacturer and the dealer, both wholesale and retail, in a more extended purchase of wrought goods. The landed proprietor will also be essentially benefited; for who does not know that the value of land must always bear a certain proportion to the demand for manufactures, and to the general diffusion of prosperity? Thus all orders will reap the advantage of a change of system.

On a subject so immediately connected with the claims of humanity, it is, surely, not too much to expect, that nothing more will be necessary to inspire an aversion to the system recently adopted, than a recollection of its actual effect in the ruin and prostration of the industrious mechanic. That man is little to be envied whose enjoyments are not essentially embittered by the prospect of surrounding misery, who daily beholds, with untroubled composure, innumerable countenances clouded with dejection and despair. Were the state of suffering with which we have long been familiar removed from immediate observation, we could scarcely hear of it without agitation; how much more afflicting to be placed in the midst of it, to feel it pressing on our senses in all directions, without the power of contributing any thing to its mitigation and relief, beyond a barren and impotent commiseration! Is there no hazard of contracting a fatal induration by a daily familiarity with indigence which we cannot alleviate, with scenes of woe we can neither remove nor diminish? To *go* into the house of mourning is good, since it is adapted to impress salutary lessons; but to *dwell* in a situation where every house is become such, is a state to which nothing but utter insensibility can be reconciled.

There are, however, higher, if not more affecting, considerations connected with the present subject. If the evil which we have now the means of escaping should return, it will be in vain for us to flatter ourselves with a long duration of tranquillity; a starving must not be expected to be a contented population, nor will any change be deprecated by those to whom existence itself has become a burthen. The instinctive feelings of nature will urge to some desperate effort, and they will cease to be restrained by legal coercion who already suffer more than the utmost rigour of the law can inflict. The heart that is withered with despair obtains an awful emancipation from the ordinary restraints of human action; and when a considerable portion of the people is reduced to that extremity, what is to be expected but that the physical energies which are found inadequate to the subsist-

ence of their possessors by the exercise of honest industry, will take an unnatural and destructive direction?

The manufacture of this county is so fortunately circumstanced in being exempted from foreign interference and competition, that nothing can materially injure it except its internal mismanagement. In the article of hosiery we possess a monopoly. While cotton thread is allowed to be exported, and to give birth to numerous foreign establishments, the kinds of wool necessary for our manufacture are prohibited from going abroad. We have the exclusive command of the market, and are under no necessity of having recourse to a reduction of price in order to defeat the competition of foreign manufacturers. All is in our own power; and if a spirit of miserable and short-sighted rivalry is suffered to depress the hire, and extinguish the comforts of the labouring mechanic, it is the odious spectacle of a family quarrelling amongst themselves. Secured from external injury, and less affected by the vicissitudes of war and peace than perhaps any other branch of commerce, because it is concerned in an article of the first necessity; those who are employed in it have only to remain true to themselves, and they may bid defiance to every effort of hostility. "If ye bite and devour," says holy writ, "see that ye are not consumed one of another." What can be more detestable than to see a system pursued which can have no other possible termination or object than the sacrifice of the happiness of the many to a few, an inconceivable few, whose prosperity is cemented by the tears of a distressed and ruined population!

In order to give employment to those who are thrown out of work, and to lighten the poor rates, some parishes have established manufactories of their own. While the system of depression continued, it was natural to have recourse to an expedient which accomplished its immediate object. But if it is proposed to give perpetuity to the present statement, that practice must be abandoned. The parishes can afford to dispose of their goods at little or no profit; but the regular manufacturers, it is natural to expect, will not submit to be undersold by a class of

persons whom they cannot but regard as intruders. hence arises a new source of competition, and a consequent depression of wages. It is in vain to expect that the manufacturer will adhere to a liberal statement of wages while he is exposed to a rivalry conducted upon unequal terms.

It is surely not too much to hope, that the good sense of parishes will prompt them to put a speedy end to this practice, and that no selfish calculation of local or immediate advantage will tempt them to support a system pregnant with extensive mischief.

It gives the writer sincere concern to hear that there are even some frame-work knitters themselves so blind to their own interest as to refuse to contribute to the general fund. With men who are resolved to shut their eyes on consequences, and are unwilling to sacrifice the smallest immediate, to the greatest future advantage, it is in vain to reason, since they have renounced the prerogative of thinking beings. As the frame-work knitters are the description of persons immediately interested, it is they who must give the first impulse. It is in vain for those to look for help who are unwilling to help themselves; and when so small a portion of their earnings is sufficient, with the assistance of a generous public, to secure them from the recurrence of recent sufferings, it is not in the power of words to express the folly which hesitates to make the necessary sacrifice. The whole system of life is a series of compromises with unavoidable evil, in which material inconveniences are endured for the acquisition of future good: and he who aspires to enjoyments unaccompanied by the necessity of self-denial and sacrifice, will not retain them long. Such, also, is the power of combination, that, small as is the sum which each individual is called to disburse, the amount of numerous contributions will lay a solid foundation for future prosperity, by protecting them from the encroachments of unfeeling rapacity.

It is asserted there are some manufacturers who have absolutely prohibited their workmen from contributing their quota to the fund. For the honour of human na-

ture, we hope the report is unfounded. We are reluctant to suppose there can be found, in a christian country, men so callous to the sentiments of humanity, as to interdict the means of self-preservation, or of temper so despotic as to attempt to infringe on the essential right of every reasonable being to consult his interest by providing for future contingencies. Let it suffice to have refused their aid to their fellow-creatures while struggling in the waves, without driving them back when they have gained the shore. We earnestly recommend the periodical publication of a correct list of the contributors, and the non-contributors, together with the reasons assigned for the conduct of the latter, that blame may be imputed only where it is due, and the patrons of oppression (if such there be) may be made amenable to the tribunal of public opinion.

From a partial view of the magnitude of the object before us, and of the extent of the mischief which requires to be remedied, those districts which are not the seat of manufacture, have manifested a reluctance to contribute; a narrow and mistaken policy, which deserves the severest reprobation. Whether the workmen in the principal manufacture of a populous county sink into wretchedness and beggary, or are maintained in a state of comfort, can never be an uninteresting circumstance to any part of its inhabitants. Humanity apart, it requires but little attention to perceive that as the ability to purchase, and, consequently, the extent of purchasers, is regulated, not by the wants, but by the pecuniary resources of the buyer, to those who have any thing to dispose of, the poverty of their customers must necessarily be injurious. But the frame-work knitters and their families constitute the most numerous class of consumers in the county, and the quantity of their consumption must be proportioned to the extent of their earnings. The circulation of money depends as much on the wages of labour, as on the profits of stock; and if thirty thousand persons rise from abject poverty to a capacity of commanding a larger share of the necessaries, and many of the comforts of life, the money which pro-

cures them will flow into every channel, so as to benefit alike the tradesman, the agriculturist, and the landed proprietor. The infusion of a new *pabulum* of life into the extremities, will strengthen and invigorate the whole body.

Let not the inhabitants of those towns and villages where no manufacture is carried on, suffer themselves to be deluded into false security, and because they hear not the sound of the knitting frame, nor behold its productions spread before their eyes, flatter themselves with the hope of impunity in the midst of surrounding distress. The ties of civil society are too close and intricate, the reciprocal action of its respective parts too great, to admit of a local circumscription of calamity. The natural effect of a remarkable depression in the staple manufacture of a county is to spread commercial embarrassment and distress throughout the whole, of which we have already had sufficient experience in the difficulties under which trade, of every description, has laboured, in consequence of the paucity of money and the diminution of demand. The tradesman, it is true, feels the effect in its first stage of operation, the agriculturist in the next, in a diminished consumption of his raw produce.

In the moral system, it is a part of the wise arrangements of Providence, that no member shall suffer alone; that if the lower classes are involved in wretchedness and beggary, the more elevated shall not enjoy their prosperity unimpaired. That constitution of society is radically unsound, of which the inferior order is vicious and miserable: a wretched and degraded populace is a rent in the foundation; or, if we may be allowed to change the figure, a taint of rottenness at the root of society, which will infallibly wither and decay its remotest branches. Alarming as the present aspect of affairs unquestionably is, the most appalling feature of the times is the prevailing discontent of the lower orders; discontent arising not so much from the infusion of speculative principles, as from the impression of actual distress. Alleviate their distress, convince them at least of your solicitude to do it, and

you extirpate the seeds of disaffection far more effectually than by all the arts of intimidation. But if an insensibility to their sufferings in the higher ranks goads them to despair, nourishes an appetite for change, and prepares them to lend themselves to the sophistry of artful demagogues and unprincipled empirics, what will be the consequence, but a divided and distracted empire, where, instead of uniting to consolidate the resources of general prosperity, the necessity of employing one part of the nation in the coercion or punishment of the other, dissipates its efforts, and cripples its energy? We have the highest authority for asserting that a "kingdom divided against itself cannot stand;" and surely no schism in the body politic can be more fatal than that which alienates the hands from the head, the physical strength of society from its presiding intellect.

It may be objected to these observations, that, however just, they are irrelevant to the subject in hand, which relates not to a national, but to a provincial object. To which the reply is obvious, that every manufacturing county constitutes an important part of the nation, and that there is no absurdity in supposing that the arrangement which is adapted to the situation of one, may be applied with equal advantage, to another. Be this as it may, if the tranquillity of a central department of the empire can be maintained by a measure, which, while it rescues a numerous description of persons from the deepest misery, is beneficial to all, and burthensome to none, much is contributed to the fund of national prosperity, composed as it is, of separate portions of individual enjoyment and security.

Waiving, for the present, the consideration of the tendency of the measure in question to promote the welfare of the nation, the writer of these lines must be permitted to avow his attachment to his *natale solum*, to the soil that gave him birth, which recalls the image of his youth, with those affecting recollections which nature longest retains, and reluctantly quits. The philanthropy which affects to feel alike for every part of mankind, is false and spurious; that alone is genuine

which glows with a warmth proportioned to the nearness of its objects. But who, that is not utterly devoid of such sentiments, can compare the present condition of the county with the past, without deep emotion? The writer well remembers it when it was the abode of health and competence; a temperate and unstrained industry diffused plenty through its towns and villages; the harsh and dissonant sound of the loom was not unpleasant to the ear, mingled with the evidence of the activity which it indicated, and the comfort it produced; the advance of summer invited the peasant to a grateful change of labour, while the village poured forth its cheerful population to assist in preparing the tedded grass, and reap the golden harvest; content resided in its valleys, joy echoed from its hills; the distresses of poverty were almost unknown, except by the idle and the profligate, its natural victims; and even the transition from peace was rather heard at a distance, than felt as a positive calamity. Some provinces, it is confessed, abounded with more splendid objects, with more curious specimens of art, and grander scenes of nature; but it was surpassed by none in the general diffusion of prosperity. But what a contrast is now presented, in the languid and emaciated forms, and dejected looks, of our industrious mechanics, who with difficulty drag their trembling limbs over scenes where their fathers gazed with rapture, "pleased with each rural sight, each rural sound!" A rapid depression of wages, like a gangrene, preys upon their vitals, and exhausts their strength. The crisis is arrived which is to decide the destiny of this part of the kingdom; its fate for the present generation, to say the least, depends, under Providence, entirely on the success of the measure now in agitation; and how, let me ask, can its hereditary nobility exert themselves more laudably, than by stretching forth the hand to save from ruin the county which gave them birth, and includes the fund of their wealth, the scene of their magnificence, and the sepulchre of their fathers?

Though this appeal is, with the utmost propriety, made to them in the first instance, it is not confined to that

elevated order; there is not a description of persons within the limits of the county who ought to contemplate the crisis with indifference; and so essential is the success of the present expedient to every hope of deliverance, that whatever be his station, he who withholds his quota from the general contribution, may justly consider himself as accessary to its ruin.

If there be any motive wanting, in addition to those which have been already urged, to excite us to exertion, it is found in the exemplary conduct of the principal sufferers. Never were privations so distressing endured with more manly fortitude; and, for my own part, I cannot look back on the patience and the constancy displayed through such a protracted scene of suffering, without ascribing it to a calm confidence in that Providence, which sooner or later, never fails to interpose in behalf of such as trust in it, and which, at length, has inspired wisdom to discover, and resolution to apply, the only remedy. They have deplored their misery, they have exhibited their grievances, to the view of the public, in the language of nature and of truth, but rarely, if ever, have they forgotten their duties. Far from shrinking from the necessity of making the first sacrifice, they have cheerfully come forward to establish the present fund, to which they have engaged to contribute sixpence a week out of their scanty earnings. We will not suppose for a moment a reluctance on the part of the public to assist and encourage a description of persons, whose welfare is inseparably combined with their own; and who, to the praise of patient endurance under the severest of trials, have added that of united and manly exertion to prevent their recurrence.

A REPLY

TO THE PRINCIPAL OBJECTIONS ADVANCED BY

COBBETT AND OTHERS

AGAINST THE

FRAME-WORK KNITTERS' FRIENDLY RELIEF SOCIETY.

[PUBLISHED IN 1821.]

A REPLY.

The virulent opposition made to the *Frame-work Knitters Friendly Relief Society*—a protective policy to secure themselves from the pressure of poverty and the pains of hunger,—may well excite the surprise of the reflecting and humane part of the public. This violence with which it is assailed forms, indeed, the most remarkable feature of the business, and is alone sufficient to awaken suspicion of a design not distinctly avowed. Its opponents are loud in proclaiming their conviction that it cannot possibly endure, that it must shortly come to an end. Why then not leave it to its fate? Why display this anxiety to accelerate its overthrow, these violent and persevering efforts to crush the feeble and precipitate the falling? If, as they contend, it contains within itself the seeds of speedy dissolution, no evil can result from abandoning it to the operation of its native tendencies, and suffering it to die a natural death. Is it not apparent that all this commotion and effort indicate a suspicion that it is not so fraught with the elements of self-destruction as they pretend, and that it *requires* to be powerfully assailed?

Its opponents confidently assert that it has no tendency to keep up the rate of wages—that these are regulated by causes over which it has no control—and that, in defiance of every possible arrangement, they will infallibly find their level. If such is really their conviction, their zeal is still more preposterous. For where is the policy or the prudence of exposing themselves to the suspicion of insensibility to the distresses of the working classes, by opposing a scheme which can have no effects, produce

no consequences, while it continues, and the futility of which will be shortly apparent to all? The list of prices agreed upon between the employers and their men, they assert, is higher than the state of the trade will allow; and that, could it be maintained, it would be detrimental to the manufacturing interest, by preventing the sale of the article. Admitting this, it would afford a sufficient reason for opposing a measure which had a tendency to produce that effect, namely, the continuance of the Statement. But as it is loudly affirmed that the Frame-work Knitters' Union has no such tendency, but will leave the rate of wages just as it was, why this superfluity of zeal in opposing what can produce no mischief? If such is their real opinion, they are fighting with a shadow—combating a phantom. This, however, will hardly be supposed. Men are not accustomed to exert themselves with vehemence against an object of which they entertain no apprehension: they usually proportion their efforts to their alarms.

It is impossible not to discern, in the wanton and virulent attack of Cobbett, and others, on the *Frame-work Knitters' Society*, that more is meant than meets the ear — that a purpose is aimed which is not yet ripe for disclosure. Of this we may be assured, that there lurks at the bottom of this opposition a secret persuasion that the permanence of the Union will effect a permanent elevation of wages, above that extreme point of depression to which they had before subsided.

Here the first question which arises is, whether the recompense of labour previous to the establishment of a fund, was such, on an average, as to enable a workman to procure for himself and his family the ordinary necessaries of life. For the answer to this we might refer the reader to our opponents, who, with some variation in their statements, unanimously acknowledge they were not sufficient for that purpose. The anonymous writer, who styles himself "An Observer," feebly attempts, it is true, to palliate the wretched condition of the workmen by referring us to the price of provisions, not in Leicestershire be it remembered, but

in Taunton,* and by informing us that a man working a frame of *thirty-two or finer gauge*, twelve hours a day, can earn eight shillings a week.† As in this very passage he is declaiming against "extreme statements as suspicious," who would suspect that the very passage which censures contains an example of it? But so it is; for the writer is informed, by the most experienced manufacturers, that the kind of work adduced is of a superior order, on which very few, in comparison, are employed; and that the average earnings previous to the Union were from five shillings and sixpence to six shillings a week, not a moiety of the sum adequate to the decent support of an industrious family. The enormous pressure on the parishes which are the principal seats of manufacture, place the matter of fact for which we are contending, beyond all controversy. But that "the labourer is worthy of his hire" is as much the dictate of reason as of scripture: and if there be any spectacle which shocks the natural feeling of justice, it is the sight of industry rewarded with famine — of a life devoted to severe and incessant toil, without the power of procuring the means of its own support. This is a state of things from which humanity recoils; but such was the condition of the greater part of the workmen previous to the *Union.*

The next question is, whether the sufferers have not a natural right to attempt the melioration of their condition; and by any means, consistent with the peace of society, and the inviolable security of property, to endeavour to rescue themselves from a state in which death is preferable to life. For what purpose, let me ask, is reason bestowed, if not to assist its possessor in contriving the means of alleviating his calamities and of improving his situation? The skill and labour of the poor man constitute his whole possession, and he has a right to place it to the best advantage, for precisely the same reason that the rich capitalist is entitled to make the most advantageous disposal of his wealth. He has consequently, if he pleases, a right to set aside a portion

* Observer, p. 5 † Ibid. p. 6.

of his earnings towards securing the means of a just and natural remuneration of his industry. I call that a just and natural remuneration which enables him to procure the necessaries of life for himself and his family. If, by the exercise of foresight and self-denial, he can evade the fatal necessity of lying entirely at the mercy of his master, where is the impropriety of his conduct, or of what have the public to complain? But such is precisely the principle of the *Frame-work Knitters' Union.* It is merely the policy of self-defence; an instrument invented by themselves, and supported principally from their own resources, for securing that recompense of labour which their employers with much unanimity affirmed to be reasonable, and which they voluntarily consented to give. It is not to be confounded for a moment with a combination to *raise* wages; it is merely a provision for securing the terms mutually stipulated between their employers and themselves. The necessity of some such measure was demonstrated by experience; a statement had been promised on a former occasion, but it was found that while there was a surplus of labour in the market, however inconsiderable, it was converted into a means of effecting a universal depression, far below the scale to which it would have naturally descended, in consequence of the decreased demand. That wages should decline to a certain extent along with the demand, is the natural consequence of the vicissitudes of trade; still, it is but equitable that they should bear some proportion to each other. We will suppose, out of ten thousand hands engaged in this manufacture, that one thousand are out of employ; here, supposing the remainder to labour with only their usual degree of assiduity, there are nine-tenths of the manufacture produced which was made when they were all at work. The probable demand has diminished one-tenth. But if the effect of this is to reduce the wages nearly one-half, so as to place the necessaries of life out of the reach of the workmen, is not this a result to be deplored? and if any means, consistent with the peace of society, can be contrived to prevent it, ought

they not to be adopted? In this case it is in vain to allege that the depression in question is rendered necessary in consequence of the decreased demand, because they bear no proportion one to the other. The demand is, by the supposition, diminished one-tenth—the wages are reduced nearly one-third. Such was the exact state of things at the late *turn-out* in Leicestershire. A proportion of about one in ten were unemployed, and this surplus of labour was converted, by a process not very creditable to the humanity of its authors, into an instrument of universal depression, to the extent already stated. The method by which it was accomplished is extremely simple. Those who are out of employ were driven, by the distress of their situation, to offer their services on terms the most disadvantageous; the offer was accepted; and this afforded a pretext for gradually lowering the wages of the rest, who had no alternative but to submit to the abatement proposed, or quit their employ. Further reductions were imposed, which, for the same reason, were, for the most part, submitted to; till, through a few successive stages, the wages of all were brought to the same level. Thus the wretched workmen were reduced to the necessity of acquiescing, not in that abatement of wages which was proportioned to the diminished demand, but in the terms which a small minority, were induced to accept; and the destitution and despair of a few became the gauge by which the miseries of all were measured out. If there is a man to be found who is perfectly reconciled to such a procedure, who sees nothing in it inconsistent with the dictates of the most refined and enlightened humanity, his mental structure is such as I shall never envy.

Since, in the case before us, it is the surplus of labour alone which affords the facility of affecting a depression so destructive, by obliging those who are unemployed to engage themselves at a price by which they could not live; the object of the *Union* is simply to take away that necessity, by withdrawing that portion of redundant labour which produced it; a mode of proceeding perfectly

analogous to that which takes place in every branch of trade and manufacture. He who is engaged in these, endeavours invariably to adjust the extent of the supply to the demand; if his capital enables him, he withholds his commodities from the market when it is glutted, and reproduces them when they are more eagerly called for. Is there any principle of political economy conceived to be violated by this discretionary power of the manufacturer to adjust his productions to his demand—to withdraw them from the market at his pleasure, when he foresees their sale will fetch no adequate returns? But this, *mutatis mutandis*, or with a slight change of names is exactly the case under present discussion. The labour and skill of the mechanic or the artist constitute the articles *he* has to dispose of; and the Frame-work Knitters' Fund, against which such a clamour has been raised by interested and designing men, is nothing more or less than a provision for withholding such a portion of that article, as he perceives cannot be employed without ruinous consequences. If the principles of political economy are those of justice and common sense, they will authorize no more interference with the labouring mechanic, than with the tradesman or manufacturer: and if the manufacturer is not compelled to dispose of his productions on destructive terms, why should the mechanic be obliged thus to dispose of his labour? It will be acknowledged, it is more *difficult* for the mechanic to adjust his labour to the demand, than it is for the manufacturer to regulate his supply by the state of the market; but this is a distinct consideration: the Frame-work Knitters' Fund is contrived with a view to obviate this difficulty, it has already done it to a great degree, and nothing but a more general cooperation of the workmen, and of parishes, is wanted to enable them to surmount it altogether.

The principles of political economy exclude the exercise of compulsion only, and, by consequence, all sort of legislative interference in commercial transactions: they were never understood by a single writer to control the exercise of free agency in any class of the community,

and consequently not in the *Leicestershire Frame-work Knitters.* The science of political economy assumes for its basis, that every person best understands his own business; that the desire of improving his condition is inherent in man; and that when every one is left to pursue his individual interest in his own way, without injuring others, the combined successes arising from the unfettered endeavours of each to advance his particular interest, will produce a greater aggregate of wealth than it is possible to realize under a pervading system of legislative control. This is the master-principle of that science; and on this principle, the makers of stockings must be supposed to understand their own interest best; they have had a long and severe training in the school of adversity; and they are unanimously of opinion that the establishment of a fund out of their own earnings, in aid of such as are out of employ, is the most efficient expedient for maintaining an adequate rate of wages. Having learned from experience that no agreement with their masters will stand, unless it is protected by such a provision, they have made it chiefly from their own resources, assisted by those parishes whose interest is deeply implicated in their support.

As far as the Fund is supported by the voluntary contributions of the men and of the parishes, both actuated solely by a view to their own interest, the whole proceeding is perfectly consonant to the principles of political economy, correctly interpreted; and for the voluntary contributions of the public, they are to be considered as entirely provisionary, to be continued no longer than is necessary to give stability to an infant institution; in which light they are abundantly justified by the principles of humanity, which are paramount to every other.

The total want of candour or of information in Mr. Cobbett is apparent in his neglecting to advert to the voluntary contributions of the Frame-work Knitters. The reader of his coarse invectives would be led to conclude, that the men contributed nothing, that it was merely a project of the public to aid the operative class

in a particular manufacture; when in fact the whole affair originated with themselves, by whom it has all along been chiefly supported, and on whose exertions, aided by the parishes which are deeply interested in its preservation, its permanence entirely depends. As our opponents, there is little doubt, "hissed for this fly," it is probable he was not put in possession of a circumstance which forms the nerves and sinews of the Union, but supplied with that information only which best suited their purpose. A serious alarm must have been felt to prompt them to have recourse to such an ally.

"Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo."

The omission of this fact enables him to invest the whole business with an air of ridicule, for which a just statement of the case would have furnished no pretence. An extensive combination of the public to assist the Frame-work Knitters, may, considered by itself, appear somewhat romantic; but when it is viewed in the light of a temporary support to an institution, which has to struggle with difficulties arising from the ignorance of some, and the self-interested perverseness and prejudice of others, it assumes a different character. The public have, in my humble opinion, displayed both humanity and wisdom in lending their aid to a plan which has already effected much good, and promises in its fuller developement to accomplish much more; but their assistance, however meritorious, must be considered as provisionary, while the permanence of the plan wholly depends on the exertions of the workmen, and the parishes. It is on the principle of an appropriation of a part of their earnings to their mutual assistance, and as a means of enabling parishes to alleviate a numerous class at the least possible expense, that its merits must be tried, and its advantages estimated.

The "Observer" asserts that it has done little or nothing towards alleviating the general distress. The truth of this assertion, however, may be safely left to the discernment of the public. Let *them* say whether the situation of the workmen has not been materially

improved during the two years that the *Union* has subsisted. When its effect has been to raise wages at least one-third, is it possible to doubt whether such an augmentation has been productive of a proportionable increase of comfort; or what but an experience of its advantages could have prompted men, not remarkably gifted with self-denying habits, to persist so long in making such a sacrifice?

Cobbett loudly and repeatedly asserts that the manufacturers *cannot afford* to give higher wages, referring to the conduct of those Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire houses which continue to stand out, as a decisive proof of his position. "If the price," he says, "can be afforded, why do not those hosiers in most extensive business give it? If they *aver* that they can afford it, why do they not give it? Mind, it is the hosiers in most extensive business that aver this, and yet they do not give the price."* It is a sufficient reply to these triumphant interrogations, that the most respectable hosiers *do* give it, and that they who do not, find by experience, that they can procure their work to be done on lower terms; the reason of which, is a surplus of labour in the market, whose operation in causing an universal depression has been already described.

It is the opinion of the most judicious manufacturers the writer has had the opportunity of consulting, that the demand for hosiery was little, if at all, diminished at the period immediately preceding the greatest depression of wages, nor was the number out of employ previously to its taking place more than ordinary. The system of depression in this county, it is a matter of public notoriety, did not originate in a decreased demand, nor did it proceed in any assignable proportion to that supposed diminution; it originated entirely in a vicious competition among a few individuals, for the monopoly of the London market. It was the eagerness of certain individuals to undersell each other in that market, which gave birth to the

* Cobbett, p. 70.

system, and to all the unspeakable calamities which have resulted from it. The process, by which it was effected, has been already explained so often that I am afraid to repeat it: it was brought about through the medium of such as were out of employ, who, by offering themselves on inferior terms, afforded an opportunity, eagerly embraced, of gradually reducing the rest to the same level. The hosiers must surely be allowed to be the best judges what wages they can afford, a great majority of whom have recorded their judgement on this subject, by a voluntary agreement to give the *statement* price, signed and attested by their own hand. Ask any one of them who may have departed from it, why he did so? and if the reason he assigns is founded on a decreased demand, and the consequent necessity of depressing wages, I would almost consent to yield to our opponents the whole question at issue. No: this is not the answer, the writer of this can aver from his own knowledge it is not: it is always a reference to some other person, who is affirmed (whether truly or not signifies nothing) to get his work performed at a cheaper rate. In answer then to the question urged with so much exultation by Cobbett, "If the manufacturers can afford to give higher wages, why are they not given?" suffice it to say, that men are often little disposed to give what it is in their power to withhold; and that what is abated in wages is either added to profits, or goes to enable them to undersell their competitors, and by that means command a more extensive trade. Could it be proved that the *statement* had produced a glut in the market, by exceeding the demand, there would be some plausibility in Mr. Cobbett's representation; as it is, nothing can be more futile.

With a rudeness congenial with his habits, he grossly insults the anonymous writer who styles himself "Humanus," for asserting that men of little or no capital have compelled the superior manufacturers to depress the wages of their workmen, in order to prevent themselves from being excluded from the market. This he represents as the greatest of all absurdities; telling him that

he ought to have styled himself fool or hypocrite, for hazarding such a statement. If insolence were the proper corrective of folly, Mr. Cobbett would of all men be best qualified to administer the cure, though on that supposition his interference would be impertinent in the present instance. His confident assertion of the impossibility of a fact which is known to exist by all intelligent men in the county, is a specimen of his ignorance of the trade on which he so dogmatically decides. Men of little or no capital are incapable of bearing stock; they must dispose of their article at whatever price they can get, without waiting for a more favourable season. Hence they are the first to make sacrifices, to diminish the extent of which, and to enable them to sell immediately without absolute loss, they are under peculiar temptations to beat down the wages of their workmen, temptations from which the more opulent manufacturer is exempt; and when there is any considerable number out of employ, they easily find the means of effecting their object. A system, it is well known to all who reside in this county, is established, by which an extensive trade in hosiery is conducted by persons of little or no capital. Their bills, weekly drawn on London, are accepted, which is equivalent to a weekly supply of capital; and the inducement to afford this accommodation, is the extremely low price of the goods which are manufactured *under the statement.* Is there a hosier in Leicestershire who will venture to deny the justice of this statement? In fact, this system has been carried to such an extent, that the most opulent hosiers have of late succeeded worse, old-established houses have quitted the business in disgust, and the trade has been gradually transferred to those who have profited by the gradual depression of wages.

If the Frame-work Knitters' Union is dissolved, it is universally allowed they will sink and lower, nor can any limits be assigned to which they may not descend. Before its formation, nearly half the subsistence of the workmen was drawn from the parishes, or in other words, from the public. But what can be conceived

more monstrous than a manufacture carried on at the public expense, but not for the public benefit, where all the profits are appropriated to one description of persons, while the public are taxed to an enormous amount to enable a few individuals to secure to themselves those advantages? Is there an anomaly in the social system more prodigious than this, or more pregnant with the most alarming consequences? Is it a greater enormity, let me ask, to be compelled to support a numerous herd of sinecurists, pensioners, and "eaters of taxes," to use the elegant phraseology of Mr. Cobbett, than to pay half the wages of an extensive manufacture, without deriving from it one farthing of profit, while it swells out a putrid stream of pauperism which overflows the land? Mr. Cobbett perhaps sees nothing in such a state repugnant to his feelings; in the despair of the poor, and the utter incapacity of the parishes to relieve their wants, he seems to exult, as the infallible prognostic of some great convulsion; but there are those, and I hope not a few, who will contemplate such a prospect with horror.

He is anxious to impress the belief that the distress of the frame-work knitters is to be ascribed to the accumulation of taxes, and to no other cause. This, from beginning to end is his darling theme. It is far from my intention to deny that the general decay of trade and commerce is intimately connected with the enormous weight of taxation: or that it is in vain to expect a return to national prosperity, unless some efficient means are devised to lighten their pressure. It is equally certain, however, though the exhausting effect of excessive taxation may have prepared a way for the evils we deplore, that a system has been adopted in the hosiery trade which has aggravated the calamity of the working class, far beyond the necessary operation of that general cause. The taxes are the same in the west of England as in the midland counties; but the wages in the clothing districts have not been reduced: the manufacture of cloth has been all along adjusted to the demand. The weight of taxes is as heavy in the Staffordshire potteries

as here; but the remuneration of labour has remained steady and uniform. Less work is given out in proportion as the demand slackens; and I have it from the best authority, that the earnings of the workmen are, at this moment, abundantly adequate to their means of subsistence. They are three times as high as those of the stocking-makers were before the formation of the *Union.* By the system pursued in these branches, the evils resulting from a decreased demand are kept within their natural limits; no adventitious ingredient is infused into the cup, no artificial aggravation added to their sufferings. But in the hosiery manufacture it is just the reverse: the calamity indirectly inflicted on the industrious poor by means of such as are out of employ, is incalculably greater than that which results from the failure of employment; and the destitution of a part becomes, in skilful hands, a mighty engine for the destruction of the whole.

What is the remedy proposed by our opponents? "The only effectual relief," Humanus says, "for the distresses of the frame-work knitters, is for a great part of the present hands to leave the trade, and that not for a season, but entirely and for ever." We needed not the information of this sagacious adviser, that the root of the mischief lies in a redundancy of hands, that it is devoutly to be wished that parents would cease as much as possible to train up their children to this calling, that masters would take fewer apprentices, and some method could be discovered to lessen the number engaged in this branch of manufacture. This is all very desirable. But what is to become of the existing generation? To what employ can they turn with advantage who have acquired no other craft, and whose habits totally disqualify them for agricultural labour, were it to be procured? Under these circumstances, to advise them to "retire entirely and for ever," is to recommend suicide and death. Is not the *general* decay of trade and manufacture the topic of universal complaint, and must not the greatest difficulty be encountered, where all the ranks of employment are dense with population,

and crowded to excess, in attempting to open a fresh career for their industry? Unless something more practicable and definite is suggested, to bid them retire because they are not wanted, is not to advise, but to mock them.

The formation of a fund towards the support of such as are incapable of procuring work, but upon such terms as are ruinous to every description of their brethren, presents a specific remedy for the existing disorder, and the only one which is not equivalent to a cruel mockery of their woes.

The principal sophism which pervades the strictures of Mr. Cobbett, and others, on this subject, is a vicious generalization, in consequence of which he imagines he has sufficiently accounted for the wretched state of the workmen in a particular manufacture, by referring it to the cause which has produced a declension in the state of trade and manufacture in general; whence he infers that he is entitled to pour ridicule and contempt upon every expedient which is distinct from the removal of that cause. But along with the general source of a decline in commerce, there are a number of *particular circumstances* which must be noticed, in order to account for that state of depression in which some branches are found, in comparison with others. As far as our political embarrassments alone are concerned, their operation must be *equally* disadvantageous to every species of productive labour, to every kind of trade and manufacture whatever. But these are not all equally depressed, which they must have been if the political state of the nation were alone sufficient to account for all the phenomena. The fact is, that while every department of manufacture is probably injured by our pecuniary embarrassments, the working classes, in some, are found to be in a much more favourable situation than in others. The remuneration of labour, for example, in the western clothing districts, in the Staffordshire potteries, I might add in no part of the kingdom, has been depressed as it has been here. The reason of this has been again and again explained; it has arisen from the illiberal advan-

tage which has been taken of a surplus of labour, while, in the districts just referred to, that practice has not been adopted, less work is given out when less is demanded, and the earnings are sufficient to procure all the necessaries, and some of the comforts of life. As the distemper is local and specific, the remedy must be of the same description.

The list of prices agreed upon is considerably less than is sufficient to maintain the condition which honest industry ought ever to occupy, decidedly less than might be afforded in a more prosperous state of the country. It is such, however, as the great body of the masters have declared themselves able to give, while they affirm they can do no more. Since their conviction of their ability to do this is a deliberate recorded opinion, let the reader judge of the audacity of Mr. Cobbett in the following assertion: "He, Humanus," says Mr. Cobbett, "affirms that the hosiers in the most extensive business aver they can afford the statement prices. We might treat this as nothing, we might call it a falsehood, because it is against reason, and because the averment is not produced and attested; we have the bare word of an anonymous writer for it; that is all, and that is nothing." "We might call it a falsehood;" certainly Mr. Cobbett might, who displays throughout such an intimate familiarity with the "father of lies;" but let us hope no other man could be found who would stigmatize as a falsehood, the assertion that such is the averment of the manufacturers, after they had signed and attested it with their own hand. This recorded opinion is an unanswerable confutation of the assertion, so often repeated by our opponents, that the hosiers cannot afford the *statement* price; for surely they will not be so absurd as to impute to them a formal resolution of giving wages, which they were conscious at the time they could not well afford. It may, therefore, be assumed as a fact, placed beyond all dispute, that the *statement* proposed is such as will leave a reasonable rate of profits to the hosiers, from whence we adduce two conclusions; first, that the assertion of those who maintain that the *state-*

ment, were it adhered to, would be ruinous to the trade, is a falsehood, because it is formally contradicted by the persons who must be allowed, in what immediately concerns their own interest, to be the best judges: secondly, that besides the operation of taxes in deteriorating wages, other causes, of a more specific nature, have contributed to produce that effect, and that, consequently, the whole argumentation of Mr. Cobbett, which proceeds upon the denial of this, falls to the ground.

It is repeatedly objected by the "Observer," that the proposed *statement* can never become permanent, because it is impossible to induce the masters to adhere unanimously to their agreement. To this I answer, that such unanimity is not contemplated, nor is it necessary. The principal, perhaps the only benefit of the agreement is, that it stamps a legal character on the proceedings of the men, which might otherwise expose them to the penalties of combination. If they become sufficiently enlightened to their own interests, to afford an adequate support to the fund, the surplus labour will be disposed of, and it will no longer be in the power of those who may be disposed to convert it into an instrument of universal depression. The list of prices agreed upon at Nottingham, in the year 1819, to which the "Observer" refers, produced no permanent effect in Nottinghamshire, nor in Derbyshire, because no fund was established in those counties to support it; in Leicestershire the same agreement was followed by the most efficient consequences, because it received that support. And this is the reason, and the only reason, that every thing reverted so soon to its former state; not, as this writer affirms, in consequence of a diminution of demand produced by the *statement;* for, had this been the cause, the effect would have been felt in Leicestershire equally, but it was not, solely because the surplus of labour was removed by the provisions of the fund.

The "Observer" further remarks, that "it borders on the ludicrous to talk of men *plunged in the very depths of despair*, from their scanty earnings raising a fund for their unemployed associates; and, unless they can do

this, their project must fail." This writer forgets that he had before represented these very men in a tolerably comfortable state, referring us for proof to the price of provisions in the Taunton market. It suited the scope of his argument then to elevate their condition, whom he now, for a similar purpose, "*plunges into the very depths of despair.*" The reader will, in a moment, perceive what credit is due to a writer who is entangled in such contradictions, who attributes to the same persons comfort and despair, just as it suits his convenience. But, passing these inconsistencies, the reply is obvious, that, if the manufacturers in the neighbouring counties imitate the example of this, their men, no longer plunged into the very depths of despair, will be incomparably more able to subscribe sixpence a week to the fund, than to procure subsistence in their present circumstances. The "Observer" must be aware that their competence to contribute their quota is assumed only on the supposition of the *statement* being given; and he must not be permitted to change suppositions backwards and forwards, with the same dexterity that he converts comfort into despair. Since it is allowed by our opponents, that, where no fund exists, the workmen are "in the depths of despair," the only question is, what must be done? How is the intolerable load under which they are groaning to be alleviated or removed? Mr. Cobbett's grand panacea is, recourse to the parishes; not that he is so ignorant as to suppose it possible they should afford effectual relief, but that he forsees other effects resulting from it, which he is evidently much more anxious to realise. "But," says he, "are you to have no redress? Are you to starve, in short? No: no man, woman, or child is to starve; the law says so, and rely upon the law. A man works constantly; he is sober, he wastes nothing. His master can or will give him no more; and with what he gets he is starving with his family. Now what says the law? Why, that he shall be relieved, that he shall share out of the common stock, out of that which was originally one man's as well as another's; out of that

which God gave for all—out of the *land*."* But is he not aware that the pressure of parish rates is already almost intolerable; that they are levied on thousands who are themselves on the brink of pauperism; and that, in many parts of the country, they have reduced the value of land to such a state, that even were it occupied free of rent, the farmer could hardly subsist by the produce? It is true they may not have reached the point which Mr. Cobbett triumphantly contemplates, the utter ruin and extinction of landed proprietors; but they have already attained a portentous magnitude, which no lover of his country can contemplate without dismay.

This seems to be the proper place for noticing a monstrous position advanced by this writer, with a confidence which can only be surpassed by its falsehood. "Viewing the thing in its true light," he says, "what is the nation, and particularly *the landed proprietor*, to gain by an additional sum being given to you in wages? What is he to gain by a million of money paid to stocking weavers *more* than is now paid to them? Is there not a million *less* to be laid out by somebody else? If the labourer pays a crown a year more for stockings, has he not a crown less to lay out in bread and beer? If, indeed, the additional million were paid to you, were to be expended by you, or flung into the sea; or if the additional million were to drop down into your hands from the clouds, in either of these cases there might be some sense in Humanus's argument: as the thing is, it is nonsense."† This is the reasoning, be it remembered, of the man who in the same pamphlet ascribes all our calamities "to so large a portion being taken from those who labour, to be given to those who do not labour."‡ If the above reasoning is correct, it would follow that the value of land would not be diminished, though the stocking weavers earned nothing at all, but were entirely supported by the parish. On this supposition,

* Cobbett, p. 97. † Ibid. p. 91. ‡ Ibid. p. 117.

it is true they would have no wages. but some other persons would possess them, or, which is the same thing, their amount, which, if they had *not*, they would be less able to purchase the produce of the soil, in exact proportion to that amount. More error and absurdity, I will venture to assert, were never penned within the same compass than are contained in the paragraph just quoted. It proceeds on the following extraordinary assumptions; First, That all the purchasers of hosiery are also purchasers of the other parts of the produce of the British soil, and that in the same proportion. For if this is not the case; if they either do not purchase the other parts of our produce at all, or not in the same proportion, how will it follow that they must necessarily buy just so much *less* of our corn, and of every other article which the land produces, because they buy *more* of our hosiery? Look at foreign nations: our stockings make their way into a large proportion of the habitable world; but are all the inhabitants of the regions into which they penetrate accustomed to purchase equal proportions of the other branches of our rude produce? The far greater part, it is well known, purchase none of these, and few, if any, in the same proportion.

Secondly, It assumes for granted, that all who purchase hosiery expend to the *utmost extent of their income*, so that, if they give five shillings a year *more* for hosiery, they must necessarily lay out five shillings *less* in other articles of consumption. "They have, it seems, just *so much* that they can lay out upon stockings."* It must be evident to the intelligent reader that this mode of reasoning presupposes an exact equality of expenditure and of income, and that, consequently, it is applicable only to such whose circumstances oblige them to practise in every instance the strictest and most rigid economy. But the chief purchases of manufacture are made by consumers of a very different description; by persons whose situation enables them to sustain a much greater advance of price than is here mentioned, without the

* Cobbett, p. 90.

necessity of abridging themselves in other modes of indulgence. If Mr. Cobbett's reasoning were just, the demand for every article, at distinct periods, would be exactly proportioned to its price; but experience shows the contrary, that the demand is not regulated solely by the price, but by many other concurrent causes, which it is needless at present to specify. He forgets the "eaters of taxes," the nobility, the gentry, the landed proprietors, the opulent merchants, the thriving tradesmen, together with the myriads of others, who are in easy circumstances and live within their income, all of whom wear stockings, and can well afford an advance of a few shillings on that head, without a proportional diminution in every other branch of expenditure. Though this class of the community may not be the most numerous, it cannot be doubted that they are the chief purchasers of manufacture.

Thirdly, His argument goes upon the supposition, that it is of no consequence to the public *where* wealth is deposited, provided it is not "thrown into the sea." Admitting the truth of this, how can the taxes be the cause of our calamities, as he asserts, "by taking from those who labour, and giving to those who do not labour?"* and how unreasonable and absurd his violent outcry against the landholders, pensioners, and sinecurists! To the accumulation of wealth in *their* hands he attributes all our distresses, who yet are as little disposed, we presume, as any men, "to throw it into the sea."

May they not retort upon him, and say, "You ascribe the ruin of the nation to the transfer of its wealth into the hands of those who do not labour from those who do. But our money is employed either in loans or in consumption. The capital we lend is employed by merchants and manufacturers, in maintaining productive labour, while the money we consume tends, immediately, by taking off the produce, to keep up the value of land; and it is certain, considered under either mode of operation, that, were it transferred to others, we, its present

* Cobbett, p. 92.

possessors, should have so much *less* to employ or to spend?" I am far from supposing this reasoning would be correct; but I have no hesitation in affirming it is the legitimate consequence of his principle, which is, that the landed proprietor would not be benefited by the improved condition of the working classes, nor injured even by the extinction of wages, unless "they were thrown into the sea." The operative part of the people, those, we mean, who are immediately employed in productive labour, probably compose much less than a moiety of the whole nation: the remaining part of the population must, as far as the present argument is concerned, be classed with those who *do not labour.* Suppose the wages of the stocking weavers were universally depressed, so as to be totally inadequate to their support, which was actually the case before the late regulations; in consequence of the competition among the manufacturers, a correspondent abatement in the price of the article would be the necessary consequence; hosiery would be just so much the cheaper, and the deduction from the wages, being subtracted from the price, would be in fact given to the purchasers. A very large proportion of these, however, consist of such as *do not labour.* Here then we have an example of the transfer of property from "those who do, to those who do not labour," which Mr. Cobbett represents as the root and origin of all our evils; yet strange to tell, this same writer affirms that the process by which this is effected is productive of no injury to the public. A portion of the wages withheld would, in consequence of the abatement of price pass into the hands even of the placemen, pensioners, and sinecurists themselves. Let me ask whether this would not, on his own principles, be a direct transfer of so much money from those "who labour to those who do not?" yet is he guilty of the absurdity of saying, that an arrangement which he asserts to be so destructive to the whole nation in every other instance, would in this produce no inconvenience whatever, either to the public, or to the landed proprietor.

The reader is probably by this time weary of attend-

ing to the palpable contradictions of this arrogant and superficial declaimer: suffice it to remark that it requires little or no penetration to perceive that the extinction of wages, and the consequent absolute pauperism of the working classes, would effect the deepest depression of the value of land in every manufacturing district; and that no remedy would be found in the decreased price of the article, since the saving arising from it would be reaped, not by the landholder, but by the public, in minute and almost invisible portions, through all its diversity of ranks, and by foreign nations.

Mr. Cobbett, with much confidence and equal exultation, predicts the destruction of the landed interest as the certain, the inevitable consequence of the present crisis. Whatever probability may attach to these dismal forebodings, arises chiefly, if not wholly, from the alarming increase of poor rates, and this latter from the inadequate remuneration of labour. For what is it else, except in time of sickness, which drives a poor man to have recourse to parish relief? Were the rate of wages sufficient to procure, with facility, the means of human subsistence, is it possible to doubt that the parochial burdens would be most essentially alleviated, that the farmer and householder would find it much easier to pay the ordinary rent? The ingenuity of Mr. Cobbett, however, has enabled him to discover that, were a million a year added to the wages of labour, the landed proprietor would not derive the advantage of a farthing.

These, and such like extravagancies, will be quite sufficient to satisfy the reader, that he is a popular declaimer, not a philosopher; a firebrand, not a luminary. He emits fire and smoke in abundance, like a volcano, but the whole effect is to desolate, not to enlighten. His principal artifice consists in the exhibition of a few specious and bold generalities, which he illustrates and confirms by a few prominent facts, culled for his purpose, without the slightest attempt at that patient induction and inquiry, which alone lead to solid and useful results. Shrewd, intemperate, presumptuous, careless of the truth of his representations, and indifferent to their conse-

quences, provided they make an impression, he is well qualified, it must be confessed, by his faults no less than his talents, by his inflammatory style and incendiary spirit, for the office he assumes, to scatter delusion, to excite insurrection, the Polyphemus of the Mob, "the one-eyed monarch of the blind." His strictures, however, on the topic under consideration are pregnant with instruction it was not his design to communicate. Whatever the inhabitants of this county may think of the Frame-work Knitters' Union, *he* plainly foresees in the consequences of its failure, the materials of ferocious delight; he sees, without the aid of inspiration, an inundation of miseries to follow, paupers crowding by thousands to the doors of overseers, parishes dismayed and perplexed, the poor clamouring for bread which cannot be given them, and rushing upon the point of the bayonet to avoid a more cruel and lingering death; the commencement of that tempest, in a word, which he boasts having crossed the Atlantic to witness, which is to shake all that is stable, to prostrate all that is great, and to accumulate a pile for the elevation of future demagogues.

Rome trembled when Cataline rejoiced. Let the friends of peace and order then, let the landed proprietor especially, take warning; they stand upon the brink of a precipice, from which, if they suffer themselves to be precipitated, it will be no small aggravation of their calamity to perceive the ease with which it might have been prevented; together with the contemptible agency, and the flimsy sophistry, which accelerated their overthrow. If it is some consolation to the fallen to have perished by a noble hand, the indignity of being baffled and deluded by the author of the Political Register, must be more humiliating than words can express.

Having extended these strictures beyond my original design, and exhausted, it is to be feared, the patience of my readers, it is my intention to detain them no longer than while I notice an objection to the *Union*, more plausible than any of the preceding, though for the reasons which follow, entirely destitute of solidity.

It is alleged by its opponents, that the provision of a Fund for the support of such as are out of employ, affords a direct encouragement to idleness, the most baleful habit a poor man can contract. This objection, could it be sustained, would undoubtedly be weighty; whether it can or not, must depend upon the previous question, Will the number out of employ be *permanently* greater if the *statement* continues, than on the contrary supposition? That it may have that effect for a short time, we are not disposed to deny: the manufacturers having suspended their operations to a considerable degree, some hoping for the dissolution of the Society, others from an apprehension of that event, it is probable the moment it were announced, all hands would be set to work. A spirit of vigour and activity would seem for a moment to pervade the trade. But look a step or two further. The number employed in manufacturing, the strained exertions they would be necessitated to make to compensate for the lowness of their wages, and the deteriorated state of the article, would combine to produce a glut, which re-acting both in the wages and the price, would eventually, and at no great distance neither, produce a greater surplus of labour than exists at present. As my opinion on such a subject may be deemed of little value, I must be allowed to add, that it perfectly coincides with that of the most intelligent men in the trade, and is strongly corroborated by the fact, that there were as many out of work at the time when wages were the most depressed, as at other seasons. Many of them wrought sixteen instead of twelve hours a day; the fabric produced was also of a deteriorated quality, incapable of being vended in foreign markets, insomuch that, I am credibly informed that in different parts of Europe, in Germany particularly, its being known to be *British* is a sufficient reason for refusing it. The demand for labour then, there is every reason to believe, would not be permanently augmented by returning to the former system, and consequently the number out of employ not diminished. For reasons already specified, it is almost certain the reverse would be the case, and the surplus labour keep pace with the redundant superfluity of manufacture.

The project of raising it by lowering wages has been tried, and found unavailing; and whatever attempts are made to renew it, will resemble the labour of Sisyphus; it will be rolling a stone which will for ever fall back.

The sum proposed to be paid from the Fund to such as are out of work, is, at the most, six shillings and sixpence a week, sufficient indeed to preserve them from lying utterly at the mercy of their masters, but certainly not such as to render their situation attractive, nor greater than the parishes would be under the necessity of paying shortly to a much greater number, were the Society abolished. While it provides a remedy for the existing evils, it leaves sufficient inducement to seek out other channels for their industry, whenever the state of society shall afford them.

We are far from contending that the system which it is our object to recommend is one of unmingled perfection, productive of good only, without the least alloy; for such is not the condition of human institutions, or of human affairs. The possibility of perversion and abuse inseparably adheres to every conceivable plan for ameliorating the condition of mankind; and he who refuses his approbation to every thing short of perfection, must stand still in hopeless inactivity and despair. If it has been shown that the plan adopted in Leicestershire provides the only remedy for an evil which is progressive and intolerable, that the inconveniences attending it bear no proportion to its advantages, and, above all, that the principal objections urged by its opponents will apply with equal force to every other mode of proceeding, and most of all to that which *they* recommend, every reasonable demand is satisfied. Whether this has been accomplished or not, must be left to the decision of an enlightened public; nor let it be deemed presumptuous to say, that if such had not been the firm persuasion of the author, these pages had not appeared.

If he should be thought to have treated Mr. Cobbett with too much severity, he wishes it to be clearly understood that his censure is in no degree founded on the professed attachment of that writer to the cause of re

form. Educated in the principles of Mr. Fox, and in those of the earliest and best days of Mr. Pitt, to which advancing years and experience have increased his attachment, it is impossible he should entertain a doubt that an important reform in our representation is essentially connected with the freedom, the glory, and the happiness of the British empire. But he sees in Mr. Cobbett, what the intelligent part of the public will at once discern, a design to push the industrious classes of the community to despair, and to aggravate their distresses, in order to accelerate the catastrophe he contemplates; whether it involves the preservation of the constitution, or a total subversion of the existing order of things, must be left to the judgement of the reader. On the most favourable supposition, "to do evil that good may come," to wish to see the industrious part of the population couched under a supernumerary weight, that they may become instrumental in effecting some great and undefined revolution in public affairs, is a policy which he shall ever detest; nor can he sufficiently deprecate the infusion of political venom into the discussions which the present *Union* has produced.

Let those who, from interested motives, or from motives of a still worse description, concur with Mr. Cobbett in vilifying and exploding the present plan, propose something better, unless they are determined to exemplify that malignant potency of evil by which "one sinner destroys much good." It is surely not too much to demand, before they proceed to dilapidate the only asylum offered to the industrious mechanic, that, instead of exposing him houseless and shivering to the inclement blast, they should provide some better accommodation in its room. Other expedients have been devised: a large subscription was raised, and many thousands advanced in Nottinghamshire, with a view to employ the indigent frame-work knitters, in public works. But the scheme, as might have been foreseen, proved abortive. The exertion could not be continued, a succession of public works is not easily found; and after alleviating the distress of a single winter, every thing returned back to its former channel. A similar

plan, the writer is informed, is in contemplation for this county, and, as far as it is adopted to relieve the pressure of the Fund, we shall rejoice in its success; but, if it is intended to supersede it, or to withdraw that support which the difficulties attending an infant institution may demand, it will, in my humble opinion, be unspeakably injurious. That it will produce no permanent relief to the existing distress, is evident from the example of Nottingham; and, however praiseworthy the motives of its projectors, it is but the part of candour to warn the workmen and the parishes, that if their dependence upon it tempts them to relax their present exertions, they will discover, when it is too late, that they have lost the substance by grasping at a shadow. The evil required to be remedied originates in permanent causes, such as will mock the operation of all temporary expedients.

With respect to the apprehension which some have professed to entertain, of the removal of the manufacture to the neighbouring counties, or to some distant part of the kingdom, little requires to be said. Man is the same in every county, and the energy which has been displayed by the Leicestershire weavers will, there is no doubt, be successfully imitated elsewhere, and produce the same results. In Nottinghamshire we are happy to find, from the latest intelligence, that the most numerous and respectable part of the hosiers have already acceded to the *statement*, and little doubt is entertained of the speedy concurrence of the rest. This apprehension, therefore, if there ever was any ground for it, the event has dispelled. Had it been otherwise, are the operative classes in this department to starve, or reduce to ruin every other description, by ineffectual efforts to support them, in the contemplation of a remote contingency, and for the sake of securing a manufacture, which, upon such terms, can only be considered as an epidemic disease, an imposthume, a source of misery to all who are employed in it, and of embarrassment and distress to the whole community? The competition for such a manufacture is a competition for ruin.

Before I conclude, let me be permitted to remind the

reader that there is such a sin as oppression; that it consists not in that gross violation of justice which is cognizable by law, and against which the wisdom of all civilized nations has provided; but in taking such an advantage of the weakness and necessity of the poor as converts them into mere instruments of a superior power, the victims of selfish emolument, with no other consideration than how far their physical exertions may be rendered subservient to the gratification of an unfeeling rapacity. He is the oppressor who is not restrained by the dictates of humanity from pushing, to its utmost extent, the natural superiority which riches every where possess over poverty; and the stratagems by which this may be effected are too numerous and too subtle to fall within the cognizance of any earthly tribunal. When the Scripture denounces, with such awful severity, the doom of such as "withhold their hire from those who reaped the field," we must not suppose it refers so much to a violation of compact, an offence which the laws of no civilized country would permit, as to the *inadequacy* of the recompense itself. In the eye of heaven, wages may justly be said to be *withheld* from the labourer, when they are totally inadequate to his subsistence, and such as nothing but helpless indigence could induce him to accept. Instead of inquiring how much of this species of guilt may be justly chargeable on a certain class of manufacturers in this town and county, which would only suggest matter for irritating reflection and fruitless recriminations, let us rather rejoice that a new scene has opened, and a plan been adopted, which, we trust, will cut off the opportunity from the bad, and the temptation from the good, of renewing a system which should be consigned to eternal oblivion.* In this view, we have no hesitation in asserting, that the perpetuity of the Friendly Society is intimately connected with the interest of both worlds, since it is no less the dictate of humanity and of justice, than of sound policy.

* See "Letters to Buxton," published by Longman and Co., which breathe throughout the eloquence of the heart, and in which the cause of humanity is pleaded, and the sufferings of the industrious classes painted with a pathos it is impossible to resist.

AN ADDRESS

ON

THE STATE OF SLAVERY

IN THE

WEST INDIA ISLANDS,

FROM THE COMMITTEE OF THE LEICESTER AUXILIARY ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

[PUBLISHED IN 1824.]

PROCEEDINGS.

At a Meeting of persons, inhabitants of the Town of Leicester and its Vicinity, held the 17th of December, 1823,

THOMAS BABINGTON, Esq. in the Chair;

Resolved,

1. That the individuals composing the present Meeting are deeply impressed with the conviction that the state of Slavery is repugnant to justice, humanity, and sound policy, to the principles of the British constitution, and to the spirit of the Christian religion; and that they cannot consider the legal perpetuation of Slavery, in principle, more defensive than the Slave Trade itself.

2. That they call to mind, with sorrow and shame, that there are eight hundred thousand persons in a state of personal Slavery in the Colonies of Great Britain, deprived of those civil privileges and religious advantages to which, as our fellow-subjects, they are entitled.

3. That, although a hope was long indulged, that the Abolition of the Slave Trade would have produced most beneficial consequences to the Slave population in the Colonies, no effectual steps have been taken, during the sixteen years which have elapsed since that event, for mitigating in

any material degree the evils of Negro bondage, or for putting an end to a system which outrages every feeling of humanity.

4. That the House of Commons having, during the last Session of Parliament, unanimously passed the following resolutions, viz.

> "1. That it is expedient to adopt effectual and decisive measures for meliorating the condition of the Slave population in his Majesty's Colonies;
>
> "2. That, through a determined and persevering, but judicious and temperate, enforcement of such measures, this House looks forward to a progressive improvement in the character of the Slave population; such as may prepare them for a participation in those civil rights and privileges which are enjoyed by other classes of his Majesty's subjects;
>
> "3. That this House is anxious for the accomplishment of this purpose at the earliest period that may be compatible with the well-being of the Slaves, the safety of the Colonies, and with a fair and equitable consideration of the state of property therein;"

the individuals present feel themselves called upon to promote these objects to the utmost of their power, by all prudent and lawful means.

5. That for this purpose, a Society be now formed in Leicester and its vicinity, as an Auxiliary to the Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Dominions.

6. That subscriptions be received by the Treasurer, at the Bank of Messrs. Mansfield and Co. and by the Secretary; and that all persons subscribing annually to the Society be Members of it, and be entitled to attend and vote at all General Meetings.

7. That all persons subscribing ten shillings or upwards yearly, or five pounds at one time, be Governors of the Society.

8. That the business of the Society be conducted by a President, a Treasurer, a Secretary, and a Committee, consisting of not less than fifteen Governors, and that five constitute a quorum; and that the President, Treasurer, and Secretary be, ex officio, members of the Committee.

9. That the Committee meet once every two months, and at such other times as they may fix, and call General Meetings of the Subscribers when they shall judge it requisite; and that any five members of it be authorized to direct the Secretary to summon a Special Meeting of the Committee, giving three days' notice thereof.

OFFICERS

OF THE

LEICESTER AUXILIARY ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

President.

THOMAS BABINGTON, Esq.

Treasurer.

MATTHEW BABINGTON, Esq.

Secratary.

Mr. THOMAS BURGESS.

Committee.

Hon. and Rev. H. D. Erskine.
Rev. G. B. Mitchell.
Rev. T. B. Paget.
Rev. E. H. Hoare.
Rev. Robert Hall
Rev. Charles Berry.
Rev. John Babington.
William Heyrick, Esq.
Dr. Hill.
John Coltman, Esq.
J. S. Cardale, Esq.
Mr. Priestman.
Mr. John Ellis.
Mr. Joseph Nunneley.
Mr. Frederick Bankart.
Mr. George Lockwood.
Mr. James Cort.
Mr. John Yates.

ADDRESS.

That slavery is the most deplorable condition to which human nature can be reduced, is too evident to require the labour of proof. By subjecting one human creature to the absolute control of another, it annihilates the most essential prerogative of a reasonable being, which consists in the power of determining his own actions in every instance in which they are not injurious to others. The right improvement of this prerogative is the source of all the virtue and happiness of which the human race is susceptible. Slavery introduces the most horrible confusion, since it degrades human beings from the denomination of persons to that of things; and by merging the interests of the slave in those of the master, he becomes a mere appendage to the existence of another, instead of preserving the dignity which belongs to a reasonable and accountable nature. Knowledge and virtue are foreign to his state; ignorance the most gross, and dispositions the most depraved, are requisite to reduce him to a level with his condition.

But degrading as slavery is, in its mildest form, that species of it which prevails in our West India colonies*

* The following authorized summary of the number of slaves in the British Colonies, in June 1830, may be interesting to some readers.

Antigua, 29,839. Bahama Isles, 10,841. Barbadoes, 81,902. Berbice, 21,319. Bermuda, 4,608. Cape of Good Hope, 35,509. Demerara and Essequibo, 69,467. Dominica, 15,392. Grenada, 24,342. Jamaica, 331,119. Mauritius, 76,774. Montserrat, 6,262. Nevis, 9,259. St. Christopher's, 19,310. St. Lucia, 13,661. St. Vincent, 23,589. Tobago, 12,723. Trinidad, 24,452. Virgin Islands, 5,436.

Total number of Slaves in the British Colonies, 815,804.

Free Blacks in the British Colonies, about 51,000.

is of the very worst description, far less tolerable than that which subsisted in Greece and Rome during the reign of paganism. It would be difficult to find a parallel to it in any age or nation, with the exception of those unhappy persons who are carried captive by the piratical states of Barbary. Scourged, branded, and sold at the discretion of their masters, the slaves in our West India islands are doomed to a life of incessant toil for the benefit of those from whom they receive no recompense whatever: they are indebted for their principal subsistence to the cultivation of small portions of land allotted them under the name of provision grounds: and the only time ordinarily allowed for that purpose is the day which the laws of all christian states have devoted to rest. On that day, instead of being assembled to listen to the oracles of God, and to imbibe the consolations of piety, they are necessitated to work for their living, and to dispose of the produce of their labour at the public market; the natural consequence is, that the far greater part of them are as ignorant of the first principles of christianity as though they had remained in the land of their forefathers.*

The Slave population of the United States in America, in 1830, amounted to 2,010,436; being increased threefold since the year 1790! This is an anomalous result, with which those in Great Britain who admire America, her free institutions, and her missionary spirit, are exceedingly perplexed. —ED.

* Since the first edition of this volume was published, a very important *official* document has been promulgated in reference to the duty and the consequences of instructing our West India slaves in the principles of the christian religion.

A most extensive and alarming insurrection among the slave population in Jamaica, having occurred at the very beginning of the present year, 1832, an insurrection which many influential men, and some public functionaries in that island, imputed (very erroneously, as has since been legally proved) to the instructions of christian missionaries of different persuasions; the present enlightened government of this country,—whose views in these respects are more correct, so far as public documents make them known, than those of any of their predecessors, at least during the current century,—authorized, under the direction of the King in Council, a "Despatch from Viscount Goderich to the Earl of Belmore," governor of Jamaica, dated March 1. As some of the principles developed in that paper are too valuable to be permitted to slide from the columns of a newspaper into oblivion, I shall transfer a few passages into this note.

They are driven to the field by the cart whip. They are followed by a driver, with this dreadful instrument

"The documents which your lordship has transmitted ascribe the recent commotions, not merely to the erroneous belief amongst the slaves that some law had set them free, but to the influence of religious instruction, communicated by ignorant teachers, received by a population unprepared by any previous education to apprehend the real spirit of christianity."

"Amongst those who acknowledge the divine authority of our national faith, there is no room for controversy respecting the duty of imparting the knowledge of christianity to all mankind, and especially to our more immediate dependents. However the modes or seasons of instruction may be regulated according to the various circumstances of different classes of society, nothing can justify the systematically withholding from any man, or class of men, a revelation given for the common benefit of all. I could not therefore acknowledge that the slaves in Jamaica could be permitted to live and die amidst the darkness of heathen idolatry, whatever effect the advancing light of christianity might ultimately have upon the relation of master and slave; nor am I anxious to conceal my opinion, that a change in this relation is the natural tendency, and must be the ultimate result, of the diffusion of religious knowledge amongst them. For although the great moral virtues of contentment and universal benevolence may be expected to appear amongst a christian slave population, as the legitimate fruit of christian principles, yet all probability justifies the belief, and all experience attests the fact, that the increased range of thought, the new habits of reflection, and the more lively perception of the duties owing by their fellow-christians to themselves, to which the converted slaves will attain, will gradually produce in their minds new feelings respecting their servile condition. It is also worth while to reflect on the inevitable tendencies of the laws for the abolition of the slave trade. So long as the islands were peopled by the importation of native Africans, who lived and died in heathenism, the relation of master and slave might be expected to be permanent: but now that an indigenous race of men has grown up, speaking our own language, and instructed in our religion, all the more harsh rights of the owner, and the blind submission of the slave, will inevitably, at some period more or less remote, come to an end. Deeply impressed with this conviction, his Majesty's government have endeavoured to make timely preparation for a change, which they believe could not be made abruptly without desolation and general ruin; and the calamity which we have at present to deplore is but an additional proof of the necessity of acting on so delicate a subject with this provident foresight, and of repressing those unhappy heats and prejudices which have so long obstructed the advance of the indispensable improvements, both of the law and of the state of slavery.

"I am not disposed to deny that the work of religious instruction may in some instances have been undertaken by men ill qualified for so arduous a task; and I am even ready, for the sake of argument, to adopt the improbable supposition that the pure truths of christianity may occasionally have been adulterated by instructions of a seditious

constantly in his hand, with which he is empowered to inflict, at his own discretion, a certain number of lashes

nature. Assume all this to be the case, and what is the proper inference? Not, assuredly, that the slaves be left to their native superstitions and idolatry, but that renewed exertions should be unremittingly made to diffuse amongst them more just apprehensions of religion, and clearer views of those moral obligations, to the enforcement of which all christian instruction should be subservient. Guided by these considerations, the government of this country proposed, and the two Houses of Parliament sanctioned, the enlargement of the church establishment in the West Indies on a liberal basis; and, in times of no common financial difficulties, that charge has been cheerfully sustained by the people of this kingdom. Under the influence of the same views many individuals owning property in Jamaica have subjected themselves to a large annual expenditure, to afford religious instruction to their slaves by clergymen of the established church, and, with a zeal worthy of all praise, have even undertaken the entire charge of missions to their own estates. In a similar spirit the religious societies connected with the church of England have devoted much of their funds, and directed the labours of many of their Missionaries, to the same field of exertion; and I cannot but indulge the hope, that by adapting her discipline to this new and peculiar state of society, and by inculcating among the slaves those sound views of christian truth and practice which she habitually recognizes, the church of England will confer upon our West India Colonies the inestimable benefit of such religious instruction as may at once satisfy the zeal of the most devout, and the scruples of the most cautious of the advocates for the conversion of slaves.

"It is not, however, merely to a misconception of religious truth, but to the direct instigation of some of the Missionaries that the recent insurrection is ascribed in some of the documents which your lordship has transmitted. I have observed with great satisfaction the efforts which you so judiciously made to guard the persons to whom it would belong to sit in judgement on the Missionaries, against the influence of religious prejudices; and I trust that the caution which you have given will effectually prevent the manifestation of any intemperate or hostile spirit towards them in any subsequent stage of the proceedings. I most distinctly avow my conviction that the improbability of the charge is so extreme, that nothing short of the most irresistible evidence could induce a belief of it. The Missionaries who engage in the office of converting the slaves in our colonies cannot, with charity, or in justice, be supposed to be actuated by any views of secular ambition or personal advantage. They devote themselves to an obscure, and arduous, and ill-requited service: they are well apprized that distrust and jealousy will attend them, and that the path they have chosen leads neither to wealth nor reputation. If, in their case, as in that of other men, motives less exclusively sacred than those which are avowed may exercise some influence on their minds, it were irrational either to feel surprise or to cherish suspicion on that account. The great ruling motive must, in general, be that which is professed, since, in general, there is no other advantage to be obtained than the con-

on their backs, with no exception whatever in favour of the softer sex. During the four or five months of their harvest they are compelled to protect their labour through half the night, or through the whole of each alternate night. They are every moment liable to be removed, at the will of their masters, to the remotest parts of the island, or to be transported into other islands. The ties of kindred are violently torn asunder, and the mother and children often assigned to different purchasers, and separated to distant parts. The ordinance of marriage is scarcely known among them; while the most unrestrained licentiousness and profligacy of manners, as well in their intercourse with each other as with the whites, is indulged and encouraged.

The practice of emancipation, which has long prevailed to a great extent, and been followed by the happiest effects in the old Spanish colonies, is discountenanced by the laws of our colonies, and loaded with such heavy fines in some of them as almost to amount to a prohibition. The design of such regulations is unquestionably to confer perpetuity on the present sys-

sciousness of having contributed to the diffusion of christianity throughout the world. To suppose men who act habitually on such a principle, either so insensible to the restraints of conscience, or so perverted in their estimate of right and wrong, as to foment insurrection and civil war for the subversion of slavery, or to believe them insensible to the extreme danger and suffering in which, by engaging in such an enterprise, they must involve those for whose benefit the contest was to be undertaken, would argue rather a heated and prejudiced mind, than a discerning judgment and a correct acquaintance with human character. When, therefore, I consider that no motive can be rationally assigned which should have induced the Missionaries to embark in so guilty and desperate an undertaking, I cannot but earnestly trust, that the trial of any of their number, who may be charged with a participation in this rebellion, may have been postponed until comparative tranquillity should have succeeded to the first panic, and that such trials may have been conducted not before a military tribunal, but with all the regular forms of law. Should any such Missionary have been convicted, and he awaiting the execution of his sentence on the arrival of this despatch, your lordship will not permit that sentence to be carried into effect, till his Majesty's pleasure can be known."

The entire despatch from which the above is quoted, may be seen in the "Jamaica Courant," of May 13, or "The Times," of June 22. —Ed.

tem, and extinguish in the breast of the negroes the faintest hope of the enjoyment of freedom.

Nothing was wanting to complete the misery of such a state, except to attach absolute impunity to the atrocities which the unlimited subjection of the weak to the strong is sure to produce; and this is amply provided for by that regulation universally adopted in our colonies, which excludes the testimony of a negro against a white inhabitant. In consequence of this law, the vilest miscreant may inflict whatever cruelties he pleases on the wretched blacks, providing he takes care that no white person be present. There are laws, it is true, which constitute the murder of a negro a capital offence, and which limit the measure of his punishment; but as if for the very purpose of rendering them nugatory and ridiculous, conviction is made to depend on a circumstance attending the perpetration of crimes, which it is most easy to exclude. Thus, in opposition to the genius of all enlightened legislation, the greatest facilities are presented to oppression—the greatest impediments thrown in the way of detection—and, in all that relates to the treatment of slaves, the voice of truth is silenced, evidence suppressed, the claims of justice studiously defeated, and the redress of the most atrocious injuries rendered next to impossible.

There is another particular in the state of the laws respecting negroes too remarkable to be passed over in silence. It is the obvious dictate of justice, and the practice of all civilized states, that, till guilt is proved, innocence shall be presumed; and that the *onus probandi*, the obligation of adducing evidence, shall rest with the accuser in the first instance. In the West India islands the reverse of this is established, and every negro, or man of colour, though free, is *presumed* to be a slave, and liable to be treated as such, unless he can furnish documentary evidence of his freedom. It is enacted that the presumption shall always be taken against him: so that if he loses his certificate of freedom, or it is stolen from him, it is at the option of any person to claim him, and replunge him into the horrors of slavery.

By this means many are daily deprived of their freedom; and the danger of incurring that calamity is daily suspended over the heads of the innocent.

It is no small aggravation of the cruelty of this system, that its unhappy victims have not been exposed to it as the punishment of crime, but by the violence of ruffians, who, having traversed the ocean in quest of human prey, forcibly tore them from their native shores, and the embraces of their dearest relatives, in order to expose them to sale in a distant quarter of the globe. The forms of judicial inquiry, the examination of witnesses, the proof of guilt, and the sentence of a judge, were not the precursors of this most dire calamity; it was the assault of brutal violence on helpless weakness and unsuspecting innocence—it was the grasp of the marauder and the assassin, hurrying away his victims, amidst shrieks of horror and the piercing accents of despair, which prepared these scenes of woe. These, and the descendants of these, are the persons who compose the black population of our islands. Their number is computed at present at 800,000; and if we direct our view to that portion of the British dominions, we behold the shocking spectacle of nearly a million of our fellow-subjects, with no other imputation than that of a darker skin, doomed to a condition which, were it assigned as the punishment of the greatest guilt, would be accused of immoderate severity. We behold these children of nature, for the purpose chiefly of supplying us with the ingredient which sweetens our repasts, compelled by men, who call themselves christians, to exhaust to its dregs a more bitter cup than is usually allotted to the greatest adepts in crime.

It is confidently asserted by advocates of slavery, that the situation of the negroes in our islands is preferable to that of the labouring classes in England. But the falsehood of this assertion is sufficiently proved by the numerous elopements which take place there; on referring to a very recent Jamaica paper, we observe a list of more than a hundred runaway slaves; so that, admitting this to be a fair specimen of what usually occurs, the

number of slaves who attempt to escape from their masters in one island only, amounts annually to five or six thousand. It appears that the far greater part were branded, many of them in different parts of the body, and not a few are designated by their wounds and sores, the effects of immoderate punishment. A moment's reflection must convince us, that the condition must be intolerable from which such numbers daily attempt their escape, at the hazard of tortures and of death.

We are in possession of a religion, the communication of which would afford some compensation for the injuries we have inflicted, and let in a ray of hope on the benighted mind. To say that no effectual provision has been made for this purpose, is to assert the smallest part of the truth. The religious instruction of the negroes has not only been neglected, but such regulations introduced, as renders it nearly impracticable. The attempts of this sort which have been made have not resulted from any legislative enactment, but merely from the zeal of private individuals, exposed for the most part to the utmost opposition and obloquy; nor will it admit of a doubt, that, but for the seasonable interference of the government at home, all such proceedings would long since have been suppressed. The colonial legislatures have displayed nearly as much aversion to the religious instruction of the slaves, as to the extension of their civil immunities; and, judging from their conduct, we should be tempted to infer, they were no less careful to exclude them from the hope of heaven, than from happiness on earth.

It would be natural to suppose, such a system could have few charms for the spectator, that the presence of such a mass of degradation and misery would be a source of continual annoyance, and that no exertion would be spared, by those who have it most in their power, to diminish its pressure, and lighten its horrors. On the contrary, the West India planter views it with the utmost complacency; in their eyes it seems to be a most finished and exquisite specimen of social order, a masterpiece of policy, the most precious legacy be-

queathed them by their ancestors, which they are bound to maintain inviolate in every part, to defend at the greatest risk, and to transmit unimpaired to future generations. They anticipate with the utmost confidence the perpetual duration of the system, and reprobate every measure which has the remotest tendency to endanger its existence, as the offspring of indescribable folly and wickedness. To such a degree are their moral perceptions vitiated, that they really believe they have a prescriptive right to be guilty of injustice, to trample on the image of their Maker, to erase his superscription, and to treat that portion of their species which fortune has subjected to their power, as mere beasts of burden, divested of the essential characteristics of humanity. In this instance, impious speculations have been resorted to in palliation of practical enormities; nor have there been wanting those who avow their persuasion that the negro is more nearly allied to the oran outang, than to the human kind.

Hence it appears that a state of slavery is in its operation as mischievous to the master as to the slave. If its effects on the latter are more visible in his corporeal structure, in his debased physiognomy, his dejected countenance, his lacerated skin, and not unfrequently in his "wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores;" its effects on the mind of the former are not less perceivable, in the most inveterate prejudice, a pride which spurns the restraints of justice, a violence which is deaf to the dictates of compassion—in a word, in a capricious and uncontrollable self-will, which lays waste all the finer sensibilities of the soul, and renders its possessor too often a rebel to his God, a torment to himself, and a terror to his fellow-creatures.

Sixteen years have now elapsed since the abolition of the slave trade,* and during this period few or none of those improvements have taken place in the treatment of slaves, which were expected to result from that mea-

* The resolution of the House of Commons for the abolition of the slave-trade passed in June, 1806.—Ed.

sure. At that time it was generally contended, that as the planters would be necessitated thenceforth to keep up the number of their slaves, without the aid of fresh importations, this itself would draw after it such an amelioration in the management of them, as would ensure the happiest results, without the legislative interference. The interest of the proprietors, it was supposed would so obviously coincide with the dictates of humanity, as to give these the force of law. It is too manifest, however, from the event, that in forming this conclusion we did not take sufficiently into account the shortsightedness of rapacity, the force of habit, the contagion of example, and the incurable propensity of human nature to abuse absolute power in whatever hands it is placed. The enormities which formerly characterized the slave system, have suffered little or no abatement; all its most odious peculiarities are retained, while, by the just retribution of Providence, the planters are reduced to the utmost embarrassment and distress.

After witnessing such an obstinate adherence to a system, equally injurious to the negroes and to themselves—after every suggestion of improvement has been indignantly rejected, and not a single effort made in behalf of the slave population, if we except a few verbal enactments, passed with no other view, it is evident from the event, than to elude inquiry and silence complaint—it would be more than vain, it would be foolish and preposterous, to look for any substantial redress from colonial legislators. *They* are the aggressors, *they* are the authors of the evils we complain of; and how can it be expected they should legislate against themselves? To leave the slaves in *their* hands, what is it less than to recommend the lamb to the protection of the wolf?

Slavery, considered as a perpetual state, is as incapable of vindication as the trade in slaves: they are integral parts of the same system, and, in point of moral estimate, must stand or fall together. If it be unjust to sell men into slavery, who are guilty of no crime, it must be equally so to retain them in that state; the last act of injustice is but the sequel and completion of the

first. If the natives of Africa were originally despoiled of their freedom, by rapine and violence, no man is entitled to avail himself of the condition to which they are reduced, by compelling them to labour for his benefit; nor is it less evident, that they could not possibly transmit the forfeiture to their children of those rights which they never forfeited for themselves. Thus it appears, that the claims of the planters to hold their negroes in perpetual bondage, is vitiated in its *origin;* and, having commenced in an act of injustice, can never acquire the sanction of right.

But here we are most anxious to guard against the misrepresentation of our sentiments. Convinced as we are that negro slavery is most iniquitous in its origin, most mischievous in its effects, and diametrically opposite to the genius of christianity, and of the British Constitution, we are yet far from proposing a sudden revolution. Universal experience shows, that in the body politic, no less than in the natural, inveterate diseases admit only of a slow and gradual cure; and we should deprecate an immediate emancipation almost as much as the planters themselves, from a full conviction that the debasing operation of slavery long continued, disqualifies its subjects for performing the functions, and enjoying the immunities of a free citizen.

Our object is, in the first place, to produce such an amelioration of their treatment, as shall soften the rigour of their bondage; and, in the next, that provision for their moral and religious instruction, which, by developing their faculties, and improving their character, may ultimately qualify them for the possession of the freedom, of which they have been cruelly deprived. With this view, we wish to see the competency of negro evidence established, as the only efficient check to wanton barbarity; the employment of rewards, as well as punishments; the instruction of the slaves in the principles of the christian religion; the uninterrupted enjoyment of the sabbath; the institution of marriage, and the inviolability of its rights firmly established; the exclusion of the cart-whip from the field of labour;

together with the repeal of that abominable law, which renders them liable to be sold in execution for the payment of their master's debts. If, in addition to these most wholesome regulations, facilities were afforded for the purchase of their freedom, similar to those which have been adopted in the old Spanish colonies, with the happiest effect, freedoms would be gradually obtained, in such proportion and in such numbers only as would perfectly consist with the security and tranquillity of the colonies. Thus a race of freemen, fitted by their constitution and their habits for the employment of a tropical climate, united with us by civil and religious ties, would rise up in the room of the present wretched victims of oppression; a race, that having a country to preserve, and rights to defend, would be a source of national strength, instead of inspiring terror and distrust.

The superiority of free labour, in point of emolument, to the labour of slaves, having been demonstrated by such an ample induction of facts that it may be safely classed with the most established maxims of political economy, the practice of gradual emancipation would be of essential benefit to the planters, and greatly augment the value of our West India possessions. Indeed, there cannot be a more cogent proof of the folly of pertinaciously adhering to the present system, than the acknowledged inability to sustain a competition with the growers of sugar in the East Indies. In order to raise the price of East India produce, so as to enable the planter in the West to keep the market, an extra duty is imposed to a large amount, and the people of England are obliged to pay upwards of two millions a year more for that article than would be necessary if a fair competition were allowed; in other words, the inhabitants of Great Britain are assessed to the amount of more than two millions annually, for no other purpose than to maintain the slave system in the West Indies; and, in opposition to the dictates of humanity, the precepts of religion, and the principles of political economy and impartial justice, we contribute more to perpetuate

our own disgrace, than it would be deemed prudent to bestow in the purchase of the greatest blessing. All our plans of domestic improvement, joined to all the efforts which we make for the diffusion of religion and virtue in foreign nations, our schools, our Bible societies, and our missions, justly considered as the peculiar glory of the age, cost us a mere scantling, compared to what is annually devoted to that very pious and benevolent object, the perpetuation of slavery in the West Indies; —we throw mites into the treasury of the sanctuary, and heap ingots on the altar of Moloch.

And why, it is natural to ask, why is it necessary to load the importation of sugar from the East Indies with such heavy duties, in order to enable the growers of the same article in an opposite quarter of the globe, at not one third the distance, to sustain a competition? Purely because the East India sugar is produced by the labour of freemen, the West India by the labour of slaves. The industry of the former is animated by hope, that of the latter depressed by despair; one is sustained by the energies of nature, the other extorted by the mechanical operation of the lash; the former labour for themselves, the latter for their masters; and such is the distinction between these two species of industry, that it more than annihilates the local difference between three or four, and twelve thousand miles. Surely the good sense of the nation will at last awake to a perception of this flagrant enormity, and express its impatience at the ignominy and injustice of such an assessment, in that firm and constitutional tone which the legislature will not despise.

Let us not be discouraged if, in this great enterprise, our attempts are not immediately crowned with success. The slave-trade, be it remembered, was long upheld by a combination of private interests, in opposition to the remonstrances of reason, humanity, and religion; but it fell at last. Such, unquestionably, will be the fate of slavery. It may, like its twin brother, be supported for a time, by that grand obstruction to all enlightened legislation, the opposition of interested individuals, who may

obscure truth by sophistry, and intimidate justice by a formidable array of influence; but it is one of the felicities of a free country that nothing can be permanent which will not sustain the ordeal of inquiry and the shock of discussion.

We indulge a hope, though the measures of administration during the last session of parliament fell far short of our wishes, that it was from a want of resolution, more than of good intention; that they have formed on the whole a correct view of the subject, and that they are not unwilling to receive that support from the expression of the public mind, which a combination of private interests renders necessary. Be this as it may, as we are always answerable for the evils which it is in our power to prevent, and some of the greatest disorders in society have been corrected by the interference of the public, through its constitutional organs, we cannot continue passive spectators of a system, which inflicts interminable degradation and misery on eight hundred thousand of our fellow-subjects, without deeply partaking of its guilt.

The scene of their suffering is distant indeed, but not so remote as to exempt them from the operation of our laws; they form an integral part of the British dominions, and woe to that nation which extends its power to those from whom it withholds its justice! That distance, which did not secure them from spoliation and captivity while in Africa, should not be allowed for a moment to intercept our attention to their welfare and commiseration of their sufferings, now that they are transported to the West Indies. Through the aid of the public voice, the government of the day carried triumphantly in 1806 the great question of the abolition of the slave-trade. Let us endeavour, by a simultaneous movement, to strengthen the hands of the present administration, if, as we hope, they are well disposed, to stimulate them if they are sluggish, and to propel them at all events in the right direction, by such a firm and unanimous display of the public sentiment and feeling on this great occasion, as no free government will think it proper

to neglect; that we may, though late, make some reparation for the accumulated injuries of ages that are past, and signalize our connexion with Africa by other characters than those of rapine, violence, and blood.

We cannot suppose for a moment that government will suffer the extraordinary conduct recently displayed by the local authorities of Jamaica, to have any influence in preventing its adoption of such measures for the amelioration of the present system, as justice and humanity may dictate. To be bearded and insulted by persons in their situation would be mortifying enough, if the ridicule attached to their proceedings did not interfere with more serious emotions. To say that government has nothing to fear from the West India islands would be scarcely correct, for we have much to fear; but it is not from their strength, but their weakness, which is such, that, were we to withdraw our support, they would fall, like ripe fruit, into the lap of the first invader. They are so much accustomed, it seems, to proceed by the method of intimidation, as to forget their absolute dependence on Great Britain for protection, as well from domestic as from foreign dangers; nor could we wish them a more cruel revenge, than to leave them to their own resources. If, by adopting such regulations as the humanity and wisdom of parliament shall prescribe, they can make it clearly appear that their pecuniary interests are affected, (which, in our opinion, will be impossible,) let them by all means receive a suitable compensation; but let us be permitted, at the same time, to express our hope that government will not be diverted from its course by the growling of a tiger, which refuses to quit its prey.

The interference, then, of an enlightened public, to circulate information, to strengthen the hands and second the movements of government, in this most just enterprise, is imperiously demanded. We cannot sit still year after year, silent spectators of the most enormous oppression exercised within the limits of the British dominions, without partaking of its guilt. We cannot remain silent and inactive, without forgetting who we

are, and what we have done; that we are the country which, after a tedious struggle with a host of prejudices arrayed in support of opulent oppression, have overthrown the slave-trade, torn it up by the roots, and branded in the eyes of all nations the sale of human flesh, as the most atrocious of social crimes. We must forget that we are the countrymen of Granville Sharpe, who, by incredible exertions, succeeded at length in purifying the British soil from its foulest pollution, and rendered it for ever impossible for a slave to breathe its air. We must sever ourselves from all alliance of spirit with a Wilberforce and a Clarkson, who looked forward to the final emancipation of the negro race as the consummation of their labours, and were sustained in their arduous contest, by the joy which that prospect inspired. We must lose sight of still more awful considerations, and forget our great Original, "who hath formed of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth."

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES,

COLLECTED FROM

DIFFERENT SOURCES.

FRAGMENT ON POPERY.

[Written about 1824. Not published before.]

When two parties, each formidable for their numbers, and the weight of their influence and property, are animated by an equal degree of zeal, it is natural to anticipate the final success of that which possesses the most inherent strength. But if one be torpid and inactive, and the other eager and enterprising,—if one reposes on its arms, while the other is incessantly on the alert,—such a difference in their spirit is sufficient to annihilate the greatest disparity of force, and to incline the balance to the side on which superior vigour is exerted. This, if I am not greatly mistaken, is pretty nearly the case at present between the protestants and the papists, as far, at least, as respects their situation in these kingdoms. The papists appear to be stimulated by zeal and elevated by hope; the protestants content themselves with being silent spectators of their progress, while many of them seem secretly to rejoice at their success. New popish chapels are rising on every side, in situations skilfully selected, with a view to attract the public attention. The consecration is announced with ostentatious publicity, and numerously attended by the most elegant and fashionable part of a protestant population, by men of opulence, merchants, and magistrates, who are seen on no other occasions beyond the precincts of the established [church.]

Judging from the practice of a multitude in the higher classes, we are necessitated to infer, that, if the popish doctrine is not true, it is innocent and harmless; and, if not entitled to an exclusive preference, it is only

inferior to that particular form of the protestant worship which they have adopted; and that, while they decline submission to its claims, it possesses a majesty which entitles it to their occasional homage and veneration. The honest fervour of indignation with which its pretensions were repelled and its impiety resented, has disappeared: popery is now viewed by the greater part of the people with careless indifference or secret complacency.

But popery, it is alleged, is changed; its venom is exhaled; and, however erroneous in a speculative view, it is no longer fraught with the mischief and the danger which rendered it so formidable to our ancestors. *An infallible religion changed*, is nearly a contradiction in terms. A religion which is founded on the assumption of a supernatural exemption from error, on the part of its adherents, may be confuted by argument, suppressed by force, or relinquished from conviction; but it is impossible to conceive of its susceptibility of change. If it undergoes any alteration, it can only [be] in consequence of its professors renouncing some one or more of the doctrines which formerly characterised it. But those doctrines are neither more nor less than the recorded division of the church, of a church affirmed by all catholics to be infallible. The supposed infallibility of the church is the corner-stone of the whole system of popery, the centre of union amidst all the animosities and disputes which may subsist on minor subjects; and the proper definition of a catholic is one who professes to maintain the absolute infallibility of a certain community styling itself the church. For a person to dissent from a single decision of the church, is to confess himself not a catholic; because it is to affirm not only that the church may err, but that it actually has erred, and is therefore, not infallible. An infallibility, extending to some points of religious belief, and not to others, is a ridiculous chimera, which, could it be reduced to an object of conception, would subvert every rational ground of confidence: for what assurance can we have, that a community which has erred once will not fall into the

same predicament again? Positive qualities may be conceived to subsist under [all] possible degrees of magnitude; they are susceptible, to an unlimited extent, of *more* or *less:* but infallibility is a negative idea, which admits of no degrees. Detect the smallest error in the individual, or the community, which makes this pretension, and you as effectually destroy it as by the discovery of a million. If a catholic, then, professes to have changed his opinions, on any subject on which the authority of the church has been interposed, so as to dissent from its decisions, he has relinquished catholicism, and renounced the only principle which distinguished him.

The supposed dominion over the consciences of men, assumed by the Roman pontiff, is sanctioned by the decision of general councils, and incorporated with their most solemn and public acts, and must consequently be allowed to constitute one of the fundamental tenets of the papal system; and, though that usurpation, considered in itself, would be a mere enunciation of a doctrine which might be rejected with impunity, the interference of the civil magistrate, to enforce the papal claims, was countenanced and demanded by the same authority. Beyond the narrow precincts of their temporal domain, the bishops of Rome were incapable of personally carrying their persecuting edicts into force; but princes and magistrates were diligently instructed that it was their indispensable duty to suppress and punish the heretics against whom the church had denounced its anathemas. Ecclesiastics, affecting a peculiar horror of blood, declined the office of executioners, which they devolved on the temporal authorities in each state; but it is equally certain, that, in the violences which [civil magistrates] committed in the suppression of heresy, and the support of the authority of the church, they acted not merely agreeably to her wishes, but in obedience to her dictates. If there was any difference, in this respect, between the ecclesiastical and temporal powers, it was, that princes could, with great difficulty, on many occasions, be induced to keep [pace] with the prompt

and unrelenting fury of their spiritual directors. The grand lesson in which they [were] indoctrinated, with infinitely more care than any other, was the implicit obedience which they vowed to the pontiff and the church, in the enactment and execution of penal laws against the abettors of heretical opinions; an epithet bestowed upon all opinions not in accordance with the tenets of the papal community. When John Huss, the Bohemian reformer, was arrested, cast into prison, and publicly burnt alive at Constance, in spite of a "safe-conduct" given him by the Emperor Sigismund, merely because he refused to belie his conscience by abjuring his pretended heresy; all was executed under the eyes, and by the express authority, of the council, who solemnly decreed that the safe-conduct of the emperor ought to be considered as no impediment to the exercise of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, but, notwithstanding, that it was perfectly competent for the ecclesiastical judge to take cognizance of his errors, and to *punish* them agreeable to the dictates of justice, although he presented himself before them in dependence upon that protection but for which he would have declined appearing. Nor were they satisfied with this impious decision [alone.] Because murmurs were heard, on account of the violation of a legal protection, they had the audacity to add, that, since the said John Huss had, by impugning the orthodox faith, forfeited every privilege, and since no promise or faith was binding, either by human or divine right, in prejudice of the catholic faith, the said emperor had done as became his royal majesty in violating his "safe-conduct," and that whoever, of any rank or sex, dares to impugn the justice of the holy council, or of his majesty, in relation to their proceedings with John Huss, shall be punished, without hope of pardon, as a favourer of heretical pravity, and guilty of the crime of high treason.*

* Though I have nearly translated the language of the holy council, as given by L'Enfant in his History of the Council of Constance, the reader will probably not be displeased to see the original.

Here, then, we have the decision of a general council, that a dissent from the catholic faith, persisted in, exposes the offender to the forfeiture of all his rights, not excepting such as he may claim from express solemn stipulations. If there ever was an assembly fairly entitled to the epithet of œcumenical, or universal, it was certainly the Council of Constance; composed of delegates from every kingdom and country of Europe; held in the presence of an emperor, and many other sovereign

" Præsens sancta synodus ex quovis salvo-conductu per imperatorem, reges, et alios seculi principes hæreticis vel de hæresi diffamatis, putantes eosdem sic à suis erroribus revocare, quocunque vinculo se adstrinxerint, concesso nullum fidei catholicæ vel jurisdictioni ecclesiasticæ præjudicium generari, vel impedimentum præstari posse seu debere, declarat; quominus salvo dicto conductu nonobstante, liceat judici competenti ecclesiastico de ejusmodi personarum erroribus inquirere, et aliàs contra eas debite procedere, easdemque punire, quantum justitia suadebit, si suos pertinaciter recusaverint revocare errores etiamsi de salvo-conductu confisi ad locum venerint judicii, aliàs non venturi.

" Quo statuto, sive ordinatione lecto, idem statutum fuit approbatum per dictos dominos, episcopos nomine quatuor nationum, ac Reverendissimum Patrem Dominum Cardinalem Vivariensem, nomine Collegii Cardinalium, per verbum, *Placet.*

" DE SALVO-CONDUCTU HUSSONIS.

" Sacrosancta, &c. Quia nonnulli nimis intelligentes aut sinistræ intentionis, vel forsan solentes sapere plus quàm oportet, nedum regiæ majestati, sed etiam sacro, ut fertur, concilio, linguis maledictis detrahunt publicè et occulte dicentes, vel innuentes, quod salvus-conductus per invictissimum principem Dominum Sigismundum Romanorum et Ungariæ, &c., Regem, quondam Johanni Hus, heresiarchæ damnatæ memoriæ datus, fuit contra justitiam aut honestatem indebitè violatus: cumtamen dictus Johannes Hus, fidem orthodoxam pertinaciter impugnans se ob omni conductu et privilegio reddiderit alienum, nec aliqua sibi fides aut promissio, de jure naturali, divino, vel humano, fuerit in præjudicium Catholicæ fidei observanda: idcirco dicta sancta synodus præsentium tenore declarat: dictum invictissimum principem circa prædictum quondam Johannem Hus, nonobstante memorato salvo-conductu, ex juris debito fecisse quod licuit, et quod decuit regiam majestatem: statuens et ordinans omnibus et singulis Christi fidelibus, cujuscunque dignitatis, gradus, præeminentiæ, conditionis, status, aut sexus existant, quod nullus deinceps sacro concilio aut regiæ majesti de gestis circa prædictum quondam Johannem Hus detrahat sive quomodolibet obloquatur. Qui verò contrarium fecerit, tamquam fautor hereticæ pravitatis et reus criminis læsæ majestatis irremissibiliter puniatur."—*L'Enfant's History of the Council of Constance,* vol. ii. p. 491, English edit. 1730.

princes; called by the order of a pope, and signalized by the absolute deposition of two pontiffs, a forced abdication of a third, and a creation of a fourth; which extinguished a schism of forty years, and reunited the obedience of Christendom under one head. If the boasted infallibility of the church is to be found anywhere, it is undoubtedly in the acts and decrees of such an assembly.

Nor is it easy to conceive of any thing more absurd than the supposition, that it was guided by inspiration in respect to some of its decisions, and not of others. Such a partial and capricious inspiration would completely frustrate the purpose for which it was introduced, and expose us to all the perplexity and uncertainty which it was designed to prevent; since, on this supposition, nothing short of another inspiration could enable us to distinguish and select the suggestions of the first.

I am aware that, when catholics are pressed with the consequences resulting from the pretended infallibility of general councils, summoned by the authority of the pope, they take refuge in the subtle and slippery distinction between the doctrines which are, and those which are not, points of faith. Thus, in the present instance, to serve a turn, they will probably assert, or insinuate, that, although the most cruel intolerance has obtained the sanction and support of general councils, their *proper* infallibility is not impaired, because the principle which authorizes persecution is not a *point of faith.*

Without entering into the mazes of a frivolous and unintelligible dispute about words, it is sufficient to remark, that the supernatural and infallible guidance of a church, which leaves it to stumble on the threshold of morality, to confound the essential distinctions of right and wrong, to recommend the violation of the most solemn compacts, and the murder of men against whom not a shadow of criminality is alleged, except a dissent from its dogmas, is nothing worth; but must ever ensure the ridicule and abhorrence of those who judge the tree by its fruits, and who will not be easily persuaded, that the eternal fountain of love and purity inhabits the breast

which "breathes out cruelty and slaughter." If persecution for conscience sake is contrary to the principles of justice and the genius of christianity; then, I say, this holy and infallible church was so abandoned of God, as to be permitted to legitimate the foulest crimes,—to substitute murders for sacrifice, and to betray a total ignorance of the precepts and spirit of the religion which she professed to support; and whether the Holy Ghost condescended, at the same moment, to illuminate one hemisphere of hearts so hardened and minds so darkened, may be safely left to the judgement of common sense.*

It would give us unfeigned pleasure to find, that the catholics have, in good earnest, renounced the intolerant principles of their predecessors; but when we look around for some proof of this, we see nothing that is satisfactory. In the midst of much courtesy, much urbanity, and address, we meet with nothing that partakes of the nature of solid concession;—no steps retraced, no errors revoked, no protest opposed to the persecuting maxims of former times. Whatever breathes an air of liberality, issues from the unofficial communications of private individuals. We anxiously wish for some important concessions at the fountain-head,—some exposition of the catholic faith from the supreme pontiff, or his accredited agents, calculated to satisfy us that intolerance is at last expunged from the papal creed. We wish, but we wish in vain. On the contrary, we perceive, in the restoration of the jesuits,—in the total suppression (as far as his [the pope's] influence extends) of Bible societies,—in his opposition to the toleration established in Belgium,—in the exclusion of the protestant religion from Spain and Portugal, at the very moment they were indebted for their existence to the arms of protestants,—decisive evidence of a determina-

* Shortly after the execution of Huss, a letter, written to the council, in the name of the Holy Ghost, was found at the gates of some of the churches at Constance, to this effect: "The Holy Spirit to the Council of Constance, greeting. Take care of your own affairs as well as you can. For our part we cannot be with you; for we are busy about other affairs: farewell."—Ed.

tion to maintain the ancient system with inflexible rigour. We are at a loss to discover a single concession in favour of the claims of conscience, proceeding from an authority which catholics are bound to respect. The renunciation of the rights of the pope to interfere in temporal matters, and the inviolable obligation of oaths taken to heretics, will be considered perhaps by some, as important concessions; but they are far from settling the question. What security have we, that the persecuting maxims of popery are revoked, or that the consciences of its adherents are not still instructed in the indispensable duty of demanding the interference of the magistrate in the suppression and punishment of heresy?

The fundamental principle of the catholic system is, the supposed infallibility of the church of Rome. Until this point is determined, it is to little purpose to engage in particular controversies, or attempt to expose the erroneousness of her doctrines, or the idolatry of her worship. These are merely a superstructure erected without foundation.

As it is the design of the following pages to furnish a popular antidote to the seductions of her priests and advocates, it becomes indispensably necessary to examine the pleas by which her pretension to infallibility is attempted to be supported. This is the more requisite because there is reason to fear that multitudes of protestants are, in a great measure, ignorant of the *true grounds* of popery; and that, while they strongly reprobate, in detail, its errors and absurdities, having little or no acquaintance with the principle which forms the keystone of the whole system, they are easily liable to be baffled and confounded, when they encounter a subtle disputant. It will be in vain for you to urge, in debating with a catholic, the absurdity of transubstantiation, or the idolatry of the mass. You begin the controversy at the wrong end; and though you accumulate ever so large a pile of invincible argument, or scriptural proof, you make no progress. He will [seldom, if ever,] descend to meet you on that ground; he professes to prostrate both his reason and his faith before the majesty of the

church. In the mysteries of faith the dictates of reason are fallacious, the interpretation of the Scriptures is precarious and uncertain, and no basis of a divine and supernatural faith can be laid, but in submission to an authorized infallible guide,—which guide is the Roman Catholic Church! You will be reminded of the innumerable sects and schisms, convulsions and disorders, which have sprung from the exercise of a pretended free inquiry; whence he will infer the necessity of some visible standard of appeal, some acknowledged infallible judge: and the promise of the Spirit to the apostles to lead them into all truth, together with the preeminence of Peter above his colleagues; to whom, as an immovable rock and foundation of the church, "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" were exclusively assigned,—will be triumphantly urged to support the claims of the bishop of Rome, his legitimate representative and successor. Thus, by a mixture of specious probabilities, with the assumption of innumerable facts, a web of sophistry will be weaved, sufficient, often, to entangle the "unlearned and unstable." That it is nothing more, however, than unfounded and presumptuous sophistry, a little attention will enable us to perceive.

That a church is infallible is not a self-evident proposition; it is not one of those truths which are acknowledged the moment they are announced, like the assertion that two and two are four. It must therefore be *proved:* nor can it be proved by her own assertion; because it is just as easy for any other community to declare itself infallible as for the church of Rome. To allow her a prerogative so extraordinary, merely because she claims it, would legitimate the boldest imposture. As little can it be proved by any appeal to the principles of reason: the possession of infallibility by an individual, or by a number of individuals, is a matter of fact, whose truth must be evinced in the same manner as other facts. Hence it necessarily follows, that the pretensions to infallibility, assumed by the catholic church, must solely rest on the testimony of scripture. For this purpose it is alleged, that St. Peter was constituted the prince

of the apostles, the foundation on which the church was to be built; that to him were primarily and chiefly given the keys of the kingdom of heaven; that as Jesus Christ prayed for him that his faith should not fail, he possessed a guarantee for the truth of his doctrines, and the infallibility of his decisions; and that, having established his episcopal throne at Rome, he transmitted his immunities and prerogatives unimpaired to his successors in that see.

Such, for substance, is the argument deduced from scripture in support of this extraordinary pretension. To this are added other considerations of the nature of probabilities, in favour of this assumed infallibility: such as the pretended necessity of some living standard of appeal, some visible judge of controversies, together with the error, confusion, and uncertainty, to which it is asserted the church must be for ever abandoned, in the absence of some such living oracle. If christians are left to interpret the Scriptures for themselves, without an infallible guidance, their interpretations will necessarily vary in proportion to the different degrees of their capacity or attention. Their interpretation can, at best, be but probable; and a probable conclusion can never be admitted as the ground of a divine faith. It will not be at all necessary to discuss accurately, at large, the arguments founded on the passages of scripture before adduced. Suffice it to observe, that the links which compose the chain of the argument are numerous, and that it would not be easy to prove any one of them to the satisfaction of an unprejudiced inquirer. In that argument it is assumed for granted, that St. Peter was invested with a supremacy over the rest of the apostles; that the keys were *exclusively* given to him; that his faith was more indefectible than that of his brethren; that he exercised the episcopal office at Rome; and that he devolved his peculiar power and prerogatives on his successors in that sacred office. Every one of these arbitrary assumptions is destitute of a shadow of truth, either from scripture or antiquity. That Peter was *ever* at Rome, we have no evidence but vague and uncertain

tradition; that he exercised the episcopal functions there, is still more uncertain, or rather extremely improbable, as it is neither insinuated in scripture, nor very consistent with his higher character and functions. But, supposing both these points were conceded, what evidence have we of that devolution of his power and prerogatives on his successors, on which the authority assumed by the bishop of Rome entirely rests? From the language of scripture and the [testimony] of antiquity, there is much more reason for affirming that James the Less was bishop of the church of Jerusalem, than that Peter sustained that office at Rome; and, by a parity of reason, his successors must be supposed to have inherited his powers and his infallibility; and the rather, since the church at Jerusalem was the mother of all other churches, planted, not by one, but by all the apostles, often dignified, by their united presence,---a church on which the redundance of spiritual gifts was first poured and consecrated by the blood of the first martyr. If, in opposition to this, we are reminded that the succeeding bishops of Jerusalem derived from St. James the rights attached to the episcopal function, but not his personal prerogatives and immunities as an apostle,—this very distinction applies precisely to the successors of St. Peter.

This may suffice to show the extreme frivolity and levity of the proofs adduced from scripture, in support of the claim of papal or catholic infallibility. But, admitting the arguments derived from this quarter were much more cogent than they are, it is evident that they are entirely deduced from the interpretation of certain passages of scripture, and consequently depend on the correctness of that interpretation. Is this interpretation, I would ask, to be taken for granted, or is it to be proved and sustained by the principles of sound criticism? Are we to take the mere affirmation of the church of Rome on this subject, and at once admit that the inference she deduces from these passages is just because she asserts it to be so? This is impossible, because this would [be to] acknowledge her infallibility, which is the very point to be proved. We are inquiring after the *proofs* of her

infallibility: she refers us for satisfaction to the passages of scripture before adduced. Her supposed infallibility can afford no sort of security for her correct interpretation of these passages, because her object in urging these passages is to prove her infallibility. To say that she has put a right construction on these texts because she is infallible, and at the same time attempt to prove her infallibility by that construction, would be an insult to common sense. Her right to be acknowledged as the infallible guide and director of our faith, must either be blindly submitted to without proof or inquiry, or it must be left to be determined by the private judgement of every individual; and, if the votaries of the church of Rome are not willing to confess they admit the validity of her claims, without any reasons whatever, they must have exercised the right of free inquiry as well as protestants, not indeed in respect to particular controversies, but in relation to this great controversy,—What is the standard of truth, and who is the judge of controversy? The church of Rome boldly affirms, that if individuals are left to judge for themselves, such is the obscurity of scripture, that no certainty could be obtained, no conclusion deduced, in which the conscience may safely rest. Yet, with egregious inconsistency, she refers us to that very scripture in proof of the justice of her claims. Here, I would ask, can we without an infallible guide attain the real meaning of the texts which she quotes in her favour? If not, it is impossible for them to prove her infallibility. If we can, then it follows that there are some parts of scripture whose meaning may be certainly ascertained without her infallible guidance. And what, then, becomes of her complaint of the hopeless obscurity of scripture, which is affirmed to render her aid so indispensable? And what must we think of her outcries against the supposed arrogance of pretending to the exercise of free inquiry, and of judging of the Scriptures for ourselves, when, without such an exercise and such a power of judging, it is found impossible to obtain the least proof or presumption of her boasted infallibility?

Some parts of scripture, then, the church of Rome herself must allow, are capable of being understood without her aid. Those declarations of scripture on which she rests her claim to implicit submission and obedience, she *must* allow to be sufficiently plain and intelligible, to bind the conscience of every member of her community, who is prepared to assign a reason for his being a catholic: and as an entire agreement with the dogmas of the church is all the faith which she requires in order to the salvation of her members, she must acknowledge, as well as ourselves, that the Scriptures contain a rule of faith sufficient for the purpose of salvation; the only difference is, that in our opinion the scripture clearly unfolds a system of saving truth, while in [that of the Roman Catholics] they are obscure in every point, except in the few passages which direct us to the church, the only authentic and immediate source of saving knowledge.

We ascribe some efficacy to the word of God itself; while they contend that the principal or only benefit it affords consists in conducting us to the church. The Scriptures themselves, indeed, affirm, that they are "able to make us wise unto salvation," and by them "we must be judged at the last day." The church asserts on the contrary, that they are covered with an impenetrable obscurity [not to be removed] without her interference, and that we shall be judged at the last day, not by our submission *to the Scriptures*, but our obedience *to her.* In her system the principal use of the Scriptures was to give birth to the church, whose place she now occupies, whose prerogatives she assumes as the sole directory of conscience, and the living oracle of God. Her treatment of the scripture almost reminds us of the fabulous history of Jupiter, who ascended to supreme [power] by the mutilation and banishment of his father.

The portentous doctrine of infallibility, as it is employed in the catholic church, stamps an entirely new character on the christian religion, substitutes a new object of faith and dependence, deifies what is human,

hides and cancels what is divine, and transfers our allegiance from God to mortals.

But to return to the argument.—On all systems, the preference of one religion to another must either be founded on caprice, custom, or some other principle equally unworthy of determining the choice of a reasonable being, or upon examination. If the catholics wish to convert us to their persuasion, they must assign their reasons for affirming that there is in existence an infallible community, styling itself the church; that that community is their church, in preference to the Greek church, the Armenian, or the Nestorian. Here they must admit the exercise of private judgement in examining these reasons, unless they have the effrontery to assert that their bare affirmation supersedes the necessity of any further proof: and, admitting the Scriptures to be the word of God, which is the easiest task for ordinary christians—to learn from them what is necessary to salvation, or to judge of the claims of the church to supremacy and infallibility? For the former, if you believe the Scriptures themselves, nothing more is requisite than a candid and honest mind; for the latter a deep acquaintance with history and antiquity, and, particularly, a clear comprehension of the meaning of a portion of scripture, by no means the most plain and perspicuous. Involved as those passages are which are urged from the New Testament in support of the papal claims, in language highly figurative and metaphorical, is it easier for a plain unlettered christian to judge of the precise meaning of the term "keys," and "the kingdom of heaven opening and shutting," than to learn the import of that declaration, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved?" There is so much room for variation in the interpretation of the passages [on which the papists lay such great stress,] that it would not be easy to find two commentators, in any community, whose expositions perfectly coincide; with respect to the latter, he that runs may read. St. John distinctly informs us with what purpose he wrote his

gospel, in the following words: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing, ye might have life through his name." Is there sufficient evidence in what St. John wrote, to convince us that Jesus is the Christ; and is it within the power of ordinary men to judge of this evidence? If this question be answered in the affirmative, then what occasion is there for the interposition of an infallible interpreter, since he who is convinced by this record that Jesus is the Christ, is already in a state of salvation? If it be replied in the negative, that the writing of St. John is not sufficient to prove to an impartial reader that Jesus is the Christ, it must be confessed, however reluctantly, that the beloved apostle was a most impertinent and fallacious writer, in representing his performance as a fit instrument for the accomplishment of an object to which it is not adequate.

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THE CHARACTER OF THE REV. R. HALL,

OF ARNSBY.

[Written in 1791.*]

The distinguished talents of our deceased friend will long live in the remembrance of all who knew him. His advantages of education were extremely small; but possessing from his infancy a contemplative cast of mind, and a habit of patient thinking, he laid in a large stock of useful knowledge. In the character of a minister of the gospel, there have been but few more generally esteemed. Attentive only to the improvement of his hearers, he forgot himself, and appeared entirely absorbed in his subject. Though he was unacquainted with the graces of oratory, and the embellishments of language, scarcely any man spoke with a more striking and visible effect. From nature he derived a large share of sensibility; and, as he excelled at the same time in taking a profound and comprehensive view of a subject, the understandings and affections of his hearers were equally interested in his discourses, which generally flowed in a stream of argument and pathos. From a natural diffidence of temper, heightened by a consciousness of his want of education, he often ascended the pulpit with tremour; but, as soon as this subsided, he generally led his hearers, step by step, into a large field of serious and manly thinking, kindled as he advanced

* This sketch was published anonymously, at the end of Dr. Ryland's funeral sermon for Mr. Hall, of Arnsby.—Ed.

and expatiated with increasing energy and conviction till the subject was exhausted. His eminent piety lent a peculiar unction to the sentiments he delivered, led him to seize the most interesting views of every subject, and turned topics, which in the hands of others would have furnished barren speculation only, into materials for devotion and prayer. He appeared to the greatest advantage upon subjects where the faculties of most men fail them; for the natural element of his mind was greatness. At times he seemed to labour with conceptions too big for his utterance; and, if an obscurity ever pervaded his discourses, it must be traced to this source, the disproportion of his language to the vastness of his conceptions. He had great force without ornament, and grandeur without correctness. His ministry, in the hands of God, was effectual to the conversion of great numbers; and in this particular he was distinguished in a manner not very common; for the last years of his life were the most successful. But it was not only in the pulpit that he shone; in his private sphere of action, as a christian, his virtues were not less distinguished than his talents as a minister. Deep devotion and unaffected humility entered far into this part of his character. Few men have passed through greater vicissitudes of life than the deceased, and perhaps, in each of them, no man preserved with a more inviolable consistency the character of a christian. He was very early introduced into the school of affliction, and the greater part of his subsequent life was distinguished by an uncommon succession of trials and distresses. On his first entrance into the ministry his fortitude was exercised in a scene of persecution and reproaches, which lasted for many years. His worldly prospects, at the same time, were gloomy and precarious in a high degree: he had a very numerous family, and an income extremely limited. He united great susceptibility of heart with firmness of mind; and, endowed with these dispositions, he met reproaches with gentleness, sustained adversity with fortitude, and pains and sorrows of various kinds with exemplary patience. In the habitual frame of his spirit

he "walked with God." The consolations that supported him through life awaited him at death; for so tranquil were his last moments, so completely was he reconciled to the prospect of both worlds, that he declared, a little time before he expired, he *would not give a straw either to live or die.* From his first acquaintance with religion, to the close of his life, he was never known to express the least hesitation respecting his state, but enjoyed an uninterrupted assurance of a happy immortality. His conversation breathed so much of heaven, was so tinctured with the very spirit of religion, that none could enjoy it without an opportunity of being made better. It was evident to all who knew him, that his religion was not a transient impression, but a permanent principle; that it blended itself with all his feelings and his actions; and that it raised his thoughts, his views, and his passions towards heaven.

In the first years of his ministry, he encountered, as has been already remarked, much persecution and reproach; but, at length, his exemplary conduct dissipated these prejudices, and gained him so completely the esteem of all classes of mankind, that it may be doubted whether he had an enemy in the world: certainly he had none but those whom his piety made such. He was distinguished as a lover of peace, and was as anxious to heal breaches as he was cautious to avoid them. With some, his extreme solicitude for the propagation of evangelical sentiments might seem like bigotry: but those who knew him best were well convinced that this was no part of his character, and that he regarded sentiments in no other light, nor cherished them in any higher degree, than as he conceived them favourable to the interests of holiness and virtue.

His brethren in the ministry will long and deeply lament him; for to them his talents and dispositions peculiarly endeared him. How many private circles hath he cheered and enlightened by his presence! In how many public solemnities hath he lifted up an ensign to the people, invited them to the standard of the cross, and warmed and exalted their affections, whilst "his

doctrine dropped as rain, and his speech distilled as the dew!" Great abilities are often allied to pride; but the character of the deceased was an illustrious exception to this rule. His talents and virtues were in some measure concealed from the world, and almost entirely from himself, by a veil of the most unaffected modesty. He was never so happy as when he was permitted to sit in the shade, though the high opinion entertained of his abilities seldom allowed him that indulgence. It would be difficult to conceive a human mind more completely purged from the leaven of pride or of envy than was that of our deceased friend. In this particular his magnanimity was so great, that he seemed on all occasions desirous of sinking the recollection of himself in the reputation and applause of his contemporaries. To cultivate the seeds of reflection and improvement in the minds of his inferiors,—to behold the growing talents and virtues of his brethren,—to draw merit from its obscurity, and give confidence to timid worth,—formed some of the highest satisfactions of his life.

His temper was grave and contemplative, yet few men took greater delight in christian society; and on these occasions he seldom failed to mix with serious converse a vein of pleasantry and humour, in which he greatly excelled. From his integrity and knowledge, it may be inferred he was eminently skilled for imparting advice; yet so carefully did he shun every inclination to dictate, that he scarcely ever gave it unsolicited. His sentiments, when required, he imparted with tenderness and freedom; but he never made advice a disguise for arrogance, or an engine of rule, nor ever presumed to think himself affronted if his counsels were not followed. In his whole deportment, prudence and humility were conspicuous; a prudence, however, that was candid and manly, as far removed from *art* as his humility was from meanness. He had failings, no doubt, (for who is free?) but they were scarcely ever suffered to influence his conduct, or to throw even a transient shade over the splendour of his character. Upon the whole, if a strong and penetrating genius, simplicity of manners, integrity

of heart, fidelity in friendship,—and all these virtues consecrated by piety the most ardent and sincere on the high altar of devotion,—have any claim to respect, the memory of the deceased will long be cherished with tears of admiration and sorrow by those who knew him.

FUNERAL ORATION,

DELIVERED AT THE INTERMENT OF THE REV. HABAKKUK CRABB, OF ROYSTON, IN HERTFORDSHIRE, ON THE FIRST OF JAN. 1795.*

Among the many appearances which man presents to the view of a contemplative mind, death is one of the most extraordinary. Whatever be the station he has filled, and however he has conducted himself in it,—whether he has adorned it by virtue, or degraded it by vice,—whether he has passed obscurely through the world, or filled it with the fame of his actions,—he soon disappears, and the "place which once knew him, knows him no more." Over all the sons of Adam death hath reigned. The worthy and beneficent are embalmed by the tears of tender but transient regret. The chasm their departure has occasioned in society is filled up by their successors, who tread the same circle of life and death, and thus perpetuate the established order of the universe.

But though the grave terminates the business of life, it does not terminate the inquiries of the living. Whether the whole of existence is comprised within the present life, or whether it be merely a passage into an unseen state, is a question which has engaged the attention of men in every age; nor would it be possible (were it ever so proper) to detail, within the limits of this address, the various reasonings and conjectures to which it

* This first appeared in the introduction to a volume of Mr. Crabb's posthumous Sermons, published in 1795.—Ed.

Man only considers and anticipates death: he views death as from the eminence of a higher being — intellectual, spiritual, immortal

has given occasion. When we contemplate death under its sensible appearances,—the destruction of the external organs, and the corruption of the whole mass,—we are tempted to regard it as the extinction of being, and to suppose its effects upon the human race are the same as upon the inferior orders of creatures. Whatever has been the object of the senses, in both, is reduced to putrefaction and dust. But when, again, we recollect, in how many important respects we are distinguished above the brutes, we cannot help indulging higher expectations, and looking for a nobler destiny. Our superior comprehension of mind qualifies us for a longer duration of being. While the brute is capable of enjoying little more than the present moment, the remembrance of what is past, and the anticipation of what is to come, enable us to multiply our resources, and to diffuse our existence, if I may so speak, over a larger surface. To compare one state of being with another, to learn wisdom from experience, and to regulate our future expectations by what has already occurred, are employments congenial with the human mind. But it is evident that a creature, possessed of such faculties, will be capable of continually making new acquisitions of knowledge, and of advancing nearer and nearer to perfection.

Among all the tribes of creatures with which we are acquainted, man is the only one that appears to have any dread of annihilation, or the remotest conception of another state. How shall we account for the universal prevalence of these sentiments, in spite of all the sensible appearances of death, unless they are either the vestige of some early revelation, or the incorrupted dictate of nature? How is it that we are the only beings that extend their anxieties beyond the grave; that we are so reluctant to quit the present scene; and that, when we are at length compelled to depart, we grasp at the very shadow of immortality, and console ourselves with the hope of surviving in the regrets of our friends, and the reputation of our actions?

Though there seems to be much plausibility in these

topics, it must be confessed, the best arguments for a future state are derived from the moral part of our nature; or, in other words, from our capability of good and ill desert. For, since it is plain that God has made us moral agents, and placed us under a law, we may be assured he has not made us so in vain, but that he will call us to an account for our actions; and, as there is no exact distribution of rewards and punishments in this life, we are entitled to expect another, suited to the respective characters of men, and the moral attributes of the Deity. If, after all, we consider actual opinions on this head, we shall find the wisest among the heathen were far from attaining any certainty. When they gave scope to their feelings and their hopes, they sometimes painted the elysian abodes of the virtuous in the warmest colouring of eloquence; in their cooler moments they subsided into scepticism; so that, on the whole, the idea of a future state seems to have operated not so much as a fixed principle, as a vague presentiment.

Revelation can alone boast of having "brought life and immortality to light." The religion of Jesus Christ places the reality of a future state at the foundation of its truths. It is there so constantly reverted to, so often repeated, and so solemnly enforced, that it has never been by any class of christians disputed or denied. Nor is the reality only of a future state revealed in christianity: as far as is consistent with the present limitation of our faculties, it affords us the justest views of its nature; which it makes to consist not in sensual gratifications, or festive bowers—the visions of a Mahometan Paradise—but in enjoyments the most suited to the rational and immortal mind; a union with God, the knowledge of his perfections, and the eternal fruition of his love. The information which christianity imparts on these subjects is not conveyed in dark and symbolical expressions, or in a chain of philosophical reasoning; but in a manner the most perspicuous and popular. With what majestic simplicity does our Lord assure us of the resurrection of the just!—"I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead,

yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which believeth on the Son may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." When many of the disciples of our Lord went back, and walked no more with him, being offended with the sublime mysteries of his doctrine, he took occasion to ask his twelve apostles—"Will ye also go away?" To which Peter, in the name of them all, made this reply—"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." In this short answer we behold the distinguished lustre of christianity. It explains at once the ground of a rational attachment to it, and will be sufficient to justify its profession from the reproach of folly, however mysterious its doctrines, however arduous its duties, and however painful or costly its sacrifices.

There are two purposes connected with the present solemnity to which the doctrine of immortality ought to be applied. The first regards the regulation of life; the second, the inspiring us with fortitude in the contemplation of our own deaths, and those of our relatives and friends. If we consider ourselves as candidates for an eternal state of happiness, it becomes us to regard life, with all its vicissitudes, as a probationary state, and to look upon every thing, that is not directly or indirectly conducive to our eternal welfare, as foreign to our purpose, and undeserving our pursuit. Heavenly-mindedness is, in this view, as much the dictate of reason as of scripture. It is nothing more than the placing our affections where we expect our felicity; the wisdom of preferring the end to the means,—that which is permanent to that which is transitory. Let the men of the world, who disbelieve the declarations of the gospel respecting eternal realities, lead a life, if they please, of dissipation and vice: but for a professor of religion to confine his affections to the earth is equally impious and absurd. Distracted betwixt his inordinate attachment to the present, and his apprehension of a future world, his religion, if it will bear that name, must be a constant source of disquietude. He has neither the calmness of

insensibility, nor the triumph of faith. His prevailing regard to the interests of the present life renders it impossible for him to set his affections on a better state; while the carnal and reluctant glances he is compelled to take of that state are sufficient to imbitter his enjoyments and disturb his repose.

The misery which persons of this description suffer from an inward conflict, between principle and practice, is the chief reason that has induced superficial observers to represent christianity as a gloomy, melancholy system. There is no other foundation for this charge, than that its claims are grand and extensive; that it disdains a compromise with the corrupt attachments of the heart; and that they who will not allow it the dominion of their affections will find it the troubler of their thoughts.

Whoever lives under the habitual influence of those tempers which qualify us for heaven, derives from his view of the eternal world the purest serenity and delight. In the midst of the severest disappointments of human life, secret consolations spring up in his mind, which sometimes swell into rapture, disarm the world of its terrors, and afford him a foretaste of unutterable bliss. In vain will ye look elsewhere for true magnanimity and moral grandeur. It is religion alone which both animates and softens the heart, cherishes sensibility, instils fortitude, and enables us to triumph without extravagance, and to suffer without dejection.

If the scripture doctrine of immortality is entitled to so much weight in the regulation of LIFE, its influence is not less sovereign in dispelling the terrors of DEATH, and consoling us under the loss of our dearest friends and relatives. "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others who have no hope; for, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up to-

gether with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; so shall we be ever with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." And who can fail being penetrated with the divine consolation they afford? If ever christianity appears in its power it is when it erects its trophies on the TOMB; when it takes up its votaries where the world leaves them, and fills the breast with immortal hopes in dying moments.

Nor are the words I have quoted adapted to support the mind of a christian in the view of his *own* dissolution only; they administer the firmest support amidst the breaches which death is continually making in the church of Christ. A degree of sorrow, on such occasions, nature compels us to feel, and religion does not condemn. At the decease of Lazarus, while his sisters were lamenting his loss, "Jesus wept." But the sorrow which a christian feels in such situations is mingled with hope. By the light of faith, he traces his deceased friends into an eternal world. Instead of considering them as lost or extinct, he beholds them still under the eye of Divine Providence. The period of their trial is closed; they have entered into rest, where, sheltered from the storms of life and the dangers of temptation, their happiness is for ever fixed and unalterable. Their separation is neither final nor complete. The pious living and the pious dead are still one family, under one head; and when he "who is their life shall appear, they shall appear with him in glory." The friendships which have had virtue and religion for their basis will survive all human ties, outlive the habitable globe, and form in all probability, a principal part of the happiness of the blessed.

It is not unusual, I am aware, on occasions like these, to pass high encomiums on the character of the deceased; a mode of proceeding the less requisite, in the present instance, as the character of Mr. Crabb was too well established, and held in too high esteem, to have any thing to hope from praise, or to fear from censure. His mild and gentle spirit rendered it nearly impossible for him to have any enemies. The innocence and sanc-

× Sam. Johnson's Preface to Dict.

tity of his behaviour, the sensibility of his heart, the fidelity with which he discharged the duties of life, and the equanimity with which he bore its rebukes and sufferings, will leave a lasting impression on the minds of all his friends and acquaintance. You of this church and congregation have lost a friend, an instructor, a pastor; one who was anxious, on every occasion, to promote your spiritual and eternal welfare; who knew how to "rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep." You, my friends, will long remember, I trust, the affectionate exhortations he addressed to you, and make it appear, on the day of solemn account, that he "has not laboured in vain, nor spent his strength for nought." His relation to you, as your pastor, has ceased; but its effects and consequences will never cease; they will reach into eternity, and "become the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death." If the duties of the ministerial character appeared so weighty in the eyes of an apostle that he was ready to sink under it, and exclaimed, "Who is sufficient for these things?" you will recollect it was its connexion with the eternal interests of his hearers which rendered his situation so arduous, and his responsibility so awful.

You have now before you one more example of the uncertainty of life. Your deceased friend and pastor, was cut off in the midst of his days. His sun instead of performing the usual circuit, set in its meridian. He, no doubt, often endeavoured, during his continuance among you, to convince you of the vanity of the world, and the insufficiency of all its enjoyments to render you happy; but Providence determined he should do more; that he should instruct you from the tomb, on these topics, and bring them home to your senses.

Another year is passed away, and you have entered upon a new portion of time.* The division of time into distinct periods, besides its utility in business and in science, is favourable to moral reflection. On the entrance upon a new year, a contemplative mind will be

* This Oration was delivered on New Year's Day.

naturally employed in estimating its acquisitions, comparing its improvements, retracing past occurrences, and revolving future prospects. The giddy and thoughtless feel their attention for a moment fixed, and suspecting all is not right, form some indistinct resolution of repentance and amendment, which they are determined to execute as soon as some present scheme shall be finished, some prevailing passion gratified, or some expected change in their situation shall take place. The present moment seems always attended with insuperable difficulties; but they still flatter themselves with the hope of some more auspicious period, when their minds will be disengaged, their passions composed, and religion assert its power. Thus, year rolls on after year, the self-delusion is repeated, and, while they are planning new schemes of life, they sink into the grave.

If a hardened contempt of religion has slain its thousands, a feeble and irresolute spirit has slain its ten thousands. Are there none in this assembly, who it is to be feared, are convinced of the importance of religion, and are yet unwilling to pay an immediate attention to it, flattering themselves they shall have ample opportunities of satisfying all its demands?

Vain, presumptuous man! hast thou penetrated the councils of the Almighty, or been permitted to read thy destiny, that, whilst thou beholdest the ravages of death all around thee,—the multitudes which fall at thy right hand and at thy left, the young and the old, the feeble and the strong, hurried into eternity,—thou shouldst suppose thyself alone firm and immovable amidst this flux and succession of being! Wouldst thou wish to surmount the fear of death? Acquaint thyself with him who is the resurrection and the life; with that Saviour, who is its author, its revealer, and its pattern. "Take his yoke upon you, and learn of him." Attend to his instructions, and yield yourself up to his guidance. You will then be able to converse familiarly with death. You will feel no terror in the prospect of future judgement, but will wait for its approach, and be able to stand before the Son of God at

his coming. "Finally, let us who are of the light and of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation." Instead of murmuring at such afflictive dispensations as separate us from those we esteem and love, let us employ them as inducements to set our affections on a better world, where we shall shortly join them; remembering, that whatever ties of affection are broken by death, are taken from the enjoyments of time to enrich the prospect of eternity.

SKETCH

OF THE

CHARACTER OF MRS. M. CARRYER.

[WRITTEN IN 1812.]

It is not my intention to attempt a laboured eulogium on our departed sister, but justice compels me briefly to notice some of the distinguishing traits of her character. I regret that, partly owing to the natural reserve of the deceased, and partly owing to my own unsocial humour, my acquaintance with her was so limited. I knew enough of her, however, to convince me that she was a person of no ordinary worth; and, from the testimony of all who were favoured with her intimacy, I am fully persuaded her piety was of the most solid kind, not evaporating in talk, nor obtruding itself in an ostentatious profession, but operating in a constant and exemplary discharge of every private and social duty. She was a pattern of diligence, as well in her attention to domestic engagements, as in the constancy with which she applied herself to the means of grace, in the closet and in the sanctuary. As a wife, a mother, and a member of a christian church, her behaviour was such, that it is impossible to say which character she adorned most. Averse from every kind of display, her religion was of a retired nature; "planted by the rivers of water," and fed by a secret spring, "its leaf never withered, and it brought forth its fruit in its season." Her faith was such as purified the heart, and manifested itself in a

series of wise and holy actions. Her hope was an "anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast, entering into that within the veil." In the former part of her experience, she was sometimes considerably agitated by doubts and fears; but, during the progress of the malady which terminated her dissolution, her painful apprehensions gradually subsided, and, although she sowed in tears, she reaped in joy. Her dying testimony to the excellence of religion, and to the power and grace of the Redeemer, was most affecting; and will, it is humbly hoped, leave a lasting impression on survivors. She often expressed her gratitude to Providence for directing her choice to a companion in life, from whose example, and from whose prayers, she derived important assistance in her walk with God; so that the change of situation, which to many females becomes a temptation and a snare, became to her a great means of spiritual improvement. The virtues which adorn a single state, she exhibited, not only unimpaired, but with increasing lustre, in her conjugal capacity. The essential benefit she derived from her obedience to the scriptural injunction to "marry in the Lord," conveys an impressive admonition to the youth of both sexes. Let such as attach any importance to the cultivation of piety, and whose first solicitude it is to be prepared for eternity, avoid taking to their bosoms a domestic enemy, with whom it will be requisite to live in a state either of perpetual counteraction, or of sinful compliance; and from whom, without the interposition of divine grace, they must anticipate an eternal separation. Our dear departed sister made a wise choice, and determined to select, as a companion for life, one with whom she could indulge a confident hope of sharing a blessed eternity.

Her rapid advancement in every christian grace was manifest to every one except to herself: for she often expressed the deep sense she entertained of her manifest imperfections, while others beheld nothing in her but what was "pure, lovely, and of good report." As she was clothed with humility, so she was eminently sober-minded, at the utmost distance from indulging in the

levities, follies, and vain competitions of the age. She was chaste, a keeper at home, a lover of her husband, a lover of her children, and one who guided her house with discretion. Kindness to the indigent entered deeply into her character; she delighted "to do good to all men, especially to such as are of the household of faith." She was perfectly superior to the vanity of dress; her attire was suited to her station, neither mean nor splendid but such as became a woman professing godliness. Her conviction of the nothingness of the world was profound, and she longed, would her modesty have permitted, to admonish her young friends from her dying bed, to be on their guard against its fascinations and its snares. To her relations she often exclaimed, almost with her dying breath, "The world! the world!" intending to warn them of what she conceived to form their chief danger.

On the whole, among the numerous losses which this church has recently sustained, I know of none more entitled to lasting lamentation than the present; nor has there been a member removed, during the period of my ministry, whose life has been more exemplary, or whose memory will be more precious.

THE CHARACTER

OF THE LATE

REV. THOMAS ROBINSON,

VICAR OF ST. MARY'S, LEICESTER.

As exhibited in a Speech delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Leicester Auxiliary Bible Society, April 1813.

It is with a melancholy satisfaction I rise to express my entire approbation of the sentiments contained in the resolution just read.

It would, in my opinion, have been unnatural to usher our annual report into the world, without noticing that solemn and affecting dispensation which has deprived this society, this town, and this county, of its principal ornament. We are weakened this day by the falling of a pious and a great man in Israel. In the formation of this society our incomparable friend had a principal share; and through every stage he gave it an unremitted attention, and watched over its interests with a parental solicitude. The idea of instituting an auxiliary society in Leicester was no sooner suggested to him, than it engaged his most cordial good wishes: he lent to its support the vigour of his masculine understanding, the energies of his capacious heart; and to him beyond any other individual, it is indebted for the patronage and the maturity it has attained. He was, indeed, the father of this institution.—But of what institution formed for the promotion of the temporal and spiritual welfare of man-

kind in this place was he not the father? We can look nowhere, throughout this large and populous town, without perceiving the vestiges of his unwearied solicitude for the advancement of the happiness of his fellow-creatures. He has inscribed his history in the numerous charitable and religious foundations which owe their existence or their prosperity to his influence. Our jails, our hospitals, our schools, our churches, are replete with monuments of his worth, and with the effects of his energetic benevolence.

It is recorded of the great Hannibal, that, when an infant, his father conducted him to an altar, and made him vow eternal hostility to the Roman republic. Our venerable friend, when he first entered Leicester, appears, with an ardour not less intense, to have devoted himself to its interests. From the moment he entered the place, he appears to have relinquished all selfish pursuits, all idea of private gratification, and to have formed that system of conduct from which he never departed, which had the most immediate tendency to meliorate the state of its inhabitants. He became altogether a public character: he meditated, he wrote, he preached, he breathed, only for the public. Rarely, if ever, was there a mind more perfectly purified from every tincture of selfishness or vanity. He made the most extensive sacrifices of his time and of his repose, with a spontaneity and alacrity which implied an almost total oblivion of his existence as an individual. Endowed with a capacity for high attainments in science, and distinguished at the university by the honours assigned to superior merit, he generously declined the pursuit of literary eminence for the sole purpose of doing good. It is but few who are capable of adequately appreciating the magnitude of such a sacrifice. Dr. Paley was, certainly, one of those few: and I had it from the lips of our venerable friend, that, in addicting himself to the duties of a parish priest, he had, in the opinion of that great man, chosen the better part; a choice which it is evident Heaven singularly sanctioned and approved. In fixing his system of life, he

had unquestionably a view to a future account, and formed his determination on the assured persuasion of his appearing before the judgement-seat of Christ, where the salvation of one soul will cause a more glorious distinction than the greatest literary attainments; where all greatness of a merely intellectual nature will disappear, and nothing endure the scrutiny but active and disinterested virtue.

In the mean time, how narrow the bounds of his influence, how confined the ascendency of his character, had he been only the solitary student, instead of being the zealous and exemplary pastor, and the active citizen! On the former supposition, he had inscribed his memorial in books; on the present, he inscribed it on hearts; and instead of his being an object of the admiration of the few, he was the man of the people.

In separate parts of his character, it were not impossible to find some who equalled, and others who excelled him; but in that rare combination of qualities which fitted him for such extensive usefulness, he stands unrivalled. As a pastor and public instructor, it may be possible to meet with some who have attained the same eminence; as a public man, he may have been equalled; but where shall we look in modern times for such an example of the union of the highest endowments as a pastor, and preacher, with the qualifications adapted to the functions of civil life? It is this rare union which appears to me to give the character of our venerable friend its decided preeminence. It is not necessary to recall to your recollection the talents of Mr. Robinson as a public instructor; you have most, if not all of you, witnessed his pulpit exertions, on that spot where he was accustomed to retain a listening throng hanging upon his lips, awed, penetrated, delighted, and instructed, by his manly, and unaffected eloquence. Who ever heard him, without feeling a persuasion that it was the man of God who addressed him; or without being struck with the perspicuity of his statements, the solidity of his thoughts, and the rich unction of his spirit? It was the harp of David, which, struck by his powerful hands,

sent forth more than mortal sounds, and produced an impression far more deep and permanent than the thunder of Demosthenes, or the splendid coruscations of Cicero.

The hearers of Mr. Robinson were too much occupied by the subjects he presented to their attention to waste a thought on the speaker; this occupied a second place in the order of their reflections: but when it did occur, it assumed the character, not of superficial admiration, but of profound attachment. Their feelings towards him were not those of persons gratified, but benefited; and they listened to his instructions not as a source of amusement, but as a spring of living water. There never was a settled pastor, probably, who had formed a juster conception of the true end of preaching, who pursued it more steadily, or attained it to a greater extent. He preached immortal truth with a most extraordinary simplicity, perspicuity, and energy, in a style adapted to all capacities, equally removed from vulgarity and from affected refinement: and the tribute paid to his exertions consisted not in loud applauses: it was of a higher order; it consisted of penitential sighs, holy resolutions, of a determination of the whole soul for God, and such impressions on the spirits of men as will form the line of separation betwixt the happy and the miserable to all eternity.

In a word, by "the manifestation of the truth he commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God;" and the success which followed was such as might be expected from such efforts. Through the protracted period of his labours, many thousands who have finished their course with joy, derived from his ministry, there is reason to believe, the principle of a new life.

His residence in Leicester forms an epoch in the religious history of this county. From that time must be dated, and to his agency under Providence must be ascribed, a decided improvement in the moral and religious state of this town and its vicinity; an increase of religious light; together with the general diffusion of a

taste and relish for the pure word of God. It is only once in an age that an individual is permitted to confer such benefits on the place of his residence, as this ancient and respectable borough derived from the labours of Mr. Robinson; and the change which Baxter accomplished at Kidderminster, *he* effected at Leicester. It was the boast of Augustus, that he found the city of Rome composed of brick, and left it marble. Mr. Robinson might say, without arrogance, that he had been the instrument of effecting a far more beneficial and momentous change. He came to this place while it was sunk in vice and irreligion; he left it eminently distinguished by sobriety of manners and the practice of warm, serious, and enlightened piety. He added not aqueducts and palaces, nor did he increase the splendour of its public edifices; but he embellished it with undecaying ornaments; he renovated the minds of the people, and turned a large portion of them "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." He embellished it with living stones, and replenished it with numerous temples of the Holy Ghost. He extended its intercourse with heaven, and prepared a numerous class of its inhabitants for the enjoyment of celestial bliss. Of the number of those who will devoutly acknowledge him as their spiritual father at the day of final audit, that day only can determine. Nor was his usefulness confined to the permanent inhabitants of this place; it was extended to the asylum of the sick, and to the cell of the criminal: the former found in him a physician to the soul, and returned to their homes not only with recruited health, but with renovated minds; and the latter were, in many instances, by penitence, and prayer, prepared for their awful destiny. Of him it may be said, to an extent seldom equalled by a mere mortal, "He went about doing good." "When the eye saw him, it gave witness of him; when the ear heard him, it blessed him; for he helped the poor and the fatherless, and delivered them that were ready to perish." In addition to his numerous avocations, he undertook the weekly instruction of an excellent and extensive school, which was formed

in his own parish, under his auspices, to which he imparted the elements of religious knowledge with a tenderness and assiduity which will never be forgotten.

There was scarcely a charitable institution set on foot, or a scheme of benevolence devised, of which he did not form the principal spring. He was truly the centre about which every thing of public utility revolved; while his wisdom guided, his spirit animated, and his character impressed itself on all useful undertakings.

Though he came to this place a stranger, without any of the means of acquiring adventitious distinction, it is not to be wondered at that a man endued with such moral and intellectual qualities should gradually acquire distinguished ascendency. Obstructions and difficulties, indeed, he encountered at the outset of his career; but they gradually gave way to the energy of his character, and at length formed a vantage-ground, on which he stood more preeminent. By slow degrees, by a continual series of virtuous exertions, and a patient and unremitted perseverance in well-doing, he acquired a degree of influence over all classes of society, which has been the lot of few individuals. Whatever was the subject of dispute, the eminence of Mr. Robinson's services was never called in question; and however discordant the sentiments and feelings of the public on other topics, they perfectly coalesced in the homage due to his worth. To the veneration in which he was so generally held, may be ascribed the principal part of that freedom from party animosities, of that concord and harmony, which have for a long period so happily distinguished this town. The deference due to his opinion on all occasions of difficulty, the unbought tribute of esteem and affection claimed by his worth, we delighted to pay. We felt gratified on finding such a rock on which we could repose our confidence, such a great example of what is most dignified in human nature, on which we could fix our eyes. By a reflex act, the virtuous part of the community felt better pleased with themselves, in proportion as they became susceptible of love and admiration towards an object so fitted, on every principle of reason and religion, to command them.

Though I have had the honour of a personal acquaintance with Mr. Robinson for upwards of thirty years, it is comparatively but of late that I had an opportunity of contemplating him more nearly. While placed at a distance, I admired him as one of the remote luminaries which adorn the hemisphere: I certainly perceived him to be a star of the first magnitude; but no sooner was I stationed upon the spot, than I became sensible of the lustre of his beams, felt the force of his attraction, and recognized in him the sun and centre of the system. His merit was not of that kind which attracts most admiration at a distance. It was so genuine and solid, that it grew in estimation the more closely it was inspected. It is possible some men may have extended their influence to a wider circle, and moved in a more extended sphere. But where influence is diffused beyond a certain limit, it becomes attenuated in proportion to its diffusion; it operates with an energy less intense. Mr. Robinson completely filled as large a sphere of personal agency as is, perhaps, possible to an individual. He left no part of it unoccupied, no insterstices unsupplied, and spread himself through it with an energy in which there was nothing irregular, nothing defective, nothing redundant.

Our deceased friend was eminently distinguished by a steady uniformity of conduct. While he appeared to multiply himself by the extent and diversity of his exertions, the principles upon which they were conducted, the objects they were destined to promote, were invariably the same. He was not active at intervals, and at other times torpid and inert; he did not appear the public man at one time, and at another absorbed in selfish pursuits: his efforts to do good in season and out of season were constant, and his course knew no other variety than that of the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. His goodness, founded on principle and corroborated by habit, operated with the steadiness of a law of nature, the beneficial results of which can never be sufficiently appreciated till they are suspended. They who contemplated Mr. Robinson at

the distance of forty years, viewed him with the same emotions which he excited at a more advanced age, moderated, however, and chastised, by the apprehension that it was possible some unexpected temptation might occur to divert him from his career. We have seen it completed, we have witnessed his perseverance and his conquest, and have seen his virtues and his fame placed under the safeguard and seal of death and immortality.

Though he had reached that period of life which constitutes old age, it was a *cruda viridisque senectus.* His age had impaired little or nothing of his vigour; its chief effect was that of imparting additional dignity to his countenance and weight to his character. He fell like a noble tree, after two or three strokes, with all his sap and verdure, with extended boughs and rich foliage, while thousands were reposing under his shadow and partaking of his fruits. Seldom has death gained a richer spoil than in the extinction of the earthly existence of this admirable man.

Having expatiated so largely on the eminent benefits accruing to mankind from the services of our departed friend, let me request your attention for a few moments longer, while I endeavour to portray more distinctly the leading features of his character. The predominant property of his mind, intellectually considered, appeared to me to be a strong and masculine understanding, copious in its resources, versatile in its operations, and eminently prompt in its decisions. He saw with a rapid glance the different bearings of a subject, and the proper measures to be adopted in the most intricate concerns. He possessed good sense in an exquisite degree, rarely, if ever, misled by the illusions of imagination, either in himself or others. To this was united a warmth and vivacity of temperament, which made business his delight, action his element; accompanied with a resolution in his pursuits, not to be relaxed by fatigue, nor damped by discouragements, nor retarded by difficulties. To resolve and to execute, or at least to make a vigorous attempt, were with him the same thing. He joined in an eminent degree the *fortiter in re* with the *suaviter in modo;* none

more inflexible in his purposes, none more conciliating in his manners. Without losing a particle of his dignity, without meanness, artifice, or flattery, he knew how to adapt himself to all sorts of society, and was equally acceptable in the character of the saint, the sage, and the cheerful engaging companion. By his amenity of manners and benignity of mind, he smoothed the asperity of contradiction, and left to the machine of public business the least possible friction.

It is almost unnecessary to state, that he laid the foundation of public confidence in his integrity, which was such that it was not only never sacrificed, but, as far as my information extends, never suspected. They who might differ from him the most on some subjects, of a religious or political nature, never called in question the honesty of his intentions. To this he joined, as a necessary instrument of success in active life, an uncommon share of prudence: by which I mean not that timid policy which creeps along the shore, without venturing to commit itself to the ocean; which shuns danger, without aspiring to conquest; his prudence was of a more generous and enlarged sort,—the result not so much of calculation at the moment, as of well-regulated passions and established principles. He loved mankind too well to betray or speak evil of any. Vanity never made him loquacious, nor pride capricious. Having purified his mind, under the influence of religion, from vanity, pride, and resentment, the chief temptations to imprudence were precluded. His ardent mind left him no leisure for trifling, nor the great object he so steadily pursued the least disposition to mingle with the details of scandal, or the privacies of domestic life.

The foundation of all these virtues was laid in christian piety. It was this which formed the basis of his character, and directed and regulated his pursuits. His piety was warm, manly, enlightened; at an equal distance from the moroseness of bigotry, the weakness of superstition, and the intemperate sallies of enthusiasm. His character is a practical illustration of the efficacy of the Bible, of which he was a humble and diligent stu-

dent, whence he deduced his principles and formed his maxims. Religion with him was not an occasional feeling, but an habitual element; not a sudden or transient impulse, but a permanent principle, a second nature, producing purity of intention, elevation of mind, and an uninterrupted series of useful exertions. Had he been spared to attend this anniversary, he would undoubtedly have delighted us by an impressive exhibition of the excellencies of revealed truth. Providence has adopted another mode of instruction; and now invites us to learn from his life, and from his death, the lessons we are no longer permitted to hear from his lips. He, being dead, yet speaketh;—he speaks in his writings, he speaks from his tomb, and points to that volume which it is the object of this assembly to circulate, as the source of all his virtues and of all his greatness. After exhibiting, for our imitation, the lives of the holy men recorded in scripture,—men of whom the world was not worthy,—it has pleased God to present to our attention his own, formed on the same model, and replete with the same spirit. The reader of "Scripture Characters" will be powerfully impelled to copy their example, by the reflection that there are few of their excellencies which their Biographer did not attain; that they were shown in his life with no less advantage than in his writings; and that, in his most popular work, he did nothing more than inculcate by his pen what he was incessantly enforcing by his practice.

The loss which the church of Christ has sustained by the extinction of such a luminary is great; the loss to this populous town and neighbourhood irreparable. Ages may revolve ere a similar calamity occurs. The shepherd is torn from his flock; the spiritual father from his children; the sage counsellor, the patron of the poor and the destitute, and the great example of the power of religion, whose very countenance could not be beheld without tender veneration, is no more. The name of Robinson will long combine with the mention of this place a train of solemn emotions, and the stranger will indulge a pious curiosity in inspecting the spot where

he dwelt, and the church where he exercised his ministry.

We knew the precarious tenure by which we possessed him, in common with all other blessings; we knew he was mortal; but, notwithstanding we received repeated warnings by a succession of attacks, few had sufficient fortitude steadily to realize the approaching event. When the intelligence was circulated through the town —"Mr. Robinson is dead!" "Mr. Robinson is dead!" it was a thunderclap: it produced a sensation of dismay and astonishment, as though we scarcely believed to be possible what we knew to be certain; and such an air of desolation and sorrow was impressed upon the countenance of the inhabitants, that a *stranger* must have perceived they had sustained no ordinary calamity. It was such as no event could have produced, but the removal of a saint and a prophet. Whoever wishes to learn how much piety dignifies a character, how much sainted worth, in its power over the heart, preponderates over every other species of eminence, let him turn to this scene, and compare the tears of a populous neighbourhood with the unmeaning decorations of funereal grandeur. None *spoke* of his virtues, none was *eloquent* in his praise; every heart was *oppressed* with a sense of its loss.

I cannot close this address without remarking that the possession of such a man as Mr. Robinson incurs a proportionable weight of responsibility; and that the time is approaching when it will be inquired what improvement we have derived from the exercise of such talents, and the exhibition of such an example.

It is incumbent on his hearers especially to reflect, that he who watched for souls is gone to give an account not only of the principles on which *he* conducted, but of the reception *they* gave to his embassy, and, that against the impenitent and unbelieving, he is compelled to be "a swift witness before God." His warning voice, his pathetic appeals and expostulations, will be heard no more, but his record is on high, and the ministry he so long exercised amongst us, will infallibly be a savour of

life unto life, or of death unto death. His life was not so properly employed, as consumed, in the incessant labour to bring sinners to repentance; and awful will be the doom of those who persist in rejecting the overtures of mercy, the word of reconciliation, dispensed with such admirable zeal, ability, and address.

To the pastoral cares, studies, and instructions, of this most eminent servant of God, death has put a final termination; but the enjoyment of such a ministry, and even the opportunity of witnessing such an example will form a conspicuous feature in our probation, and be replete with consequences which stretch into eternity.

Permit me to indulge one more reflection: the life and ministry of this great man of God affords a demonstration of the futility of the clamour which is raised against the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith; as though it tended to relax the obligations to virtue, and to annul the commands of God. Who ever insisted on this doctrine more constantly, or urged its importance more earnestly, than he? and where, amongst its opponents, shall we discover indications of similar usefulness? Through a period of more than forty years, he employed himself in beating down the arrogance of a self-justifying spirit, in evincing the impossibility of being accepted on the footing of our own works, and in directing men of every description to seek for pardon in the blood of the cross. If there were any one topic on which he delighted to dwell more than others, this was unquestionably the topic.

To his manly and unsophisticated understanding, it was evident to a demonstration, that repentance must be grafted on humility; and that there was no room to apprehend his hearers would be tempted to contemn the authority, in consequence of being abased before the majesty, of God. He was also perfectly convinced that the blood of Christ, sprinkled by faith, was the only effectual balm for afflicted consciences. On these principles he conducted his ministry for near half a century, and we may challenge his enemies, (if there be any remaining,) to deny that its fruits were most salutary.

If the apostolic doctrine, which affirms that we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law, possess the tendency to licentiousness which its opponents ascribe to it, that tendency could not have failed to operate under a course of instruction so long continued, and of which the tenet in question formed so distinguishing a feature. "By their fruits ye shall know them: men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles."

To conclude: the fittest improvement we can make of the melancholy event we are now deploring, will be a serious attention to the exhortation of St. Paul, addressed to primitive christians on the loss of eminent pastors:--- "Remember them which have had the rule over you; and, considering the end of their conversation, imitate their faith."

FRAGMENT.

CHARACTER OF THE REV. JOHN SUTCLIFF.

[Written in 1814. Not published before.]

A sweet humility formed a very distinguishing feature in his character. Who ever witnessed, in our deceased brother, those airs of arrogance, or that fondness for display, which are frequently found in persons of very inferior talents and acquirements to those which he possessed? In truth, his aversion to ostentation might alone be said to be carried to excess, since it prevented him, in his public ministry, from availing himself of [those] ample stores of knowledge by which he could often have delighted and instructed his hearers. He had far more learning than the mere hearer of his discourses would have conjectured; for he seemed almost as anxious to conceal as some are to display.

Nor was it in this particular alone that his humility was apparent. It diffused itself over the whole of his character and deportment, and gave it a certain beauty which [no] artifice could successfully imitate. His humility was not displayed in depreciating his performances, nor in speaking of himself in degrading terms: it appeared rather in forgetting himself, and in a natural readiness to give others the superiority. It accompanied him so incessantly, that he might truly be said to "be clothed with humility."

As his disposition little inclined him to ecstasy and rapture, so his piety shone with a mild and steady lustre, perfectly free from the false fire of enthusiasm,

and equally from a lukewarm formality. There were few men in whom it appeared more natural, or more manifestly as a principle interwoven with the inmost texture of his mind. His great modesty seldom permitted him to advert to his own experience, either in public discourse, or in more private conversation; but a savour of experimental piety pervaded his whole character.

The mild and placid cheerfulness which marked his countenance and deportment, would lead us to suppose that he habitually walked in the divine light; and the evidences of his interest in the divine favour were rarely, if ever, impaired or eclipsed. He was one of the few men whose cheerfulness appeared to be increased by age; verifying, in this particular, the description given of "the path of the just, which is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." His life was truly exemplary, being filled up with an uninterrupted series of useful, benevolent, and pious actions, proceeding from their true principles, and distinguished by an eminent decorum of time and place. He was a pattern to believers, "in faith, in purity, and in conversation." Though rather the opposite to loquacious, he had a high relish for the pleasures of christian society, in which it is difficult to say whether he imparted or received most pleasure. "The law of kindness was on his tongue;" and so attentive was he on every occasion to the feelings of those with whom he conversed, that his company was both inoffensive and delightful.

Through a long series of years his attendance at the association, and at ministers' meetings, was so constant and punctual, that his occasional absence was severely felt; and that meeting seemed essentially defective, which was not graced with his presence. His appearance amongst us was hailed as a certain presage of harmony and love. Multitudes can witness the deep and pungent regret experienced at the last annual association, at the melancholy tidings of that fatal illness which prevented his attendance.

Few men took a deeper interest than our deceased brother in the general state of the church, and the propagation of the gospel abroad. The future glory of the kingdom of Christ, and the best means of promoting it, were his favourite topics, and usurped a large part of his thoughts and his prayers; nor was he ever more in his element, than when he was exerting his powers in devising plans for its extension. The baptist mission in India is under incalculable obligations to his sagacity and prudence.

MEMOIR

OF

THE REV. THOMAS TOLLER.

[WRITTEN IN 1821.]

THE subject of the following Memoir was born at South Petherton, a populous village in Somersetshire, A. D. 1756. His parents were John and Mary Toller, whose maiden name was Northcote. His father was an attorney of eminence, two of whose sons were educated for that profession. Of the early years of Thomas, the subject of the following narrative, I have little information, farther than that both his parents were eminently pious, and that he always considered himself indebted, under God, for his first religious impressions, to the tender solicitude of his mother for the promotion of his eternal welfare. Whether those impressions issued at that period in genuine conversion is not known: nor are we possessed of any authentic information of the circumstances connected with that event. The extreme diffidence and modesty which distinguished Mr. Toller, probably prevented his relating to his nearest friends the early exercises of his mind on religious subjects: the consequence is, that in this instance, as in many others, we are left to infer the reality of the change from its effects. The light and insinuations of the Divine Spirit so often accompany the conduct of a strictly religious education, that some of the most eminent Christians have acknowledged themselves at a loss to assign the precise era of their conversion; but whether

this was the case with our excellent friend, it is impossible to say.

At the early age of fifteen, his parents sent him to the academy at Daventry in Northamptonshire, over which Dr. Ashworth, the worthy successor of the celebrated Dr. Doddridge, presided: his assistant in the academy was the Rev. Mr. Robins, who afterwards occupied the same station with distinguished ability. Of both his tutors he was wont to speak in terms of high respect: of Mr. Robins he was often heard to say, that he considered him as the wisest and the best man he ever knew. Among many other mental endowments, he was remarkable for delicacy of taste and elegance of diction; and, perhaps, my reader will excuse my observing, that the first perception of these qualities which the writer of these lines remembers to have possessed, arose from hearing him preach at Northampton on a public occasion. It is to be lamented that he has left none of those productions behind him, which a correct and beautiful imagination, embodied in language of the most classic purity, rendered so impressive and delightful. The qualities of his heart corresponded to those of his genius; and though, long before his death, his bodily infirmities obliged him to relinquish a commanding station and retire into obscurity, he retained to the last such an ascendency over the minds of his former pupils, and such an interest in their affections, as nothing but worth of the highest order can command.

To return from this digression. At the time of Mr. Toller's admission into the Daventry academy, the literary reputation of that seminary was higher than that of any among the dissenters; but, partly owing to a laxness in the terms of admission, and partly to the admixture of lay and divinity students, combined with the mode in which theology was taught, erroneous principles prevailed much; and the majority of such as were educated there became more distinguished for their learning than for the fervour of their piety, or the purity of their doctrine. The celebrated Priestley speaks of the state of the academy, while he resided there, with great com-

placency: nothing, he assures us, could be more favourable to the progress of free inquiry; since, both the tutors and students were about equally divided between the orthodox and arian systems. The arguments by which every possible modification of error is attempted to be supported, were carefully marshalled in hostile array against the principles generally embraced; while the Theological Professor prided himself on the steady impartiality with which he held the balance betwixt the contending systems, seldom or never interposing his own opinion, and still less betraying the slightest emotion of antipathy to error, or predilection to truth. Thus a spirit of indifference to all religious principles was generated in the first instance, which naturally paved the way for the prompt reception of doctrines indulgent to the corruption, and flattering to the pride, of a depraved and fallen nature.

To affirm that Mr. Toller derived no injury, from being exposed at so tender an age to this vortex of unsanctified speculation and debate, would be affirming too much, since it probably gave rise to a certain general manner of stating the peculiar doctrines of the gospel which attached chiefly to the earlier part of his ministry; though it is equally certain that his mind, even when he left the academy, was so far imbued with the grand peculiarities of the gospel, that he never allowed himself to lose sight of the doctrine of the cross, as the only basis of human hope.

Of the conduct of his academical studies, nothing memorable is recorded. From a very accomplished man, who I believe was his fellow-student, I have merely heard that he had no relish for the mathematics; a circumstance which has been often recorded in the biography of men of indisputable intellectual preeminence.

After a residence at Daventry of four years, he was appointed to supply a destitute congregation at Kettering, where he preached for the first time, October 1, 1775; and his services proved so acceptable, that, after repeated visits, he was invited to take up his permanent residence with them, with which he complied in June of the

ensuing year, and was ordained pastor, May 28, 1778. On his first coming to Kettering, the church was in a divided and unsettled state. His immediate predecessor was a gentleman of the name of Fuller, who, at the end of two years, in consequence of much dissension in the church, resigned the pastoral charge. Mr. Fuller was preceded by the Rev. Mr. Boyce, who sustained the pastoral office for a long series of years with the highest reputation and success, and whose death was deplored as an irreparable calamity, leaving it very improbable that a successor could be speedily found, capable of uniting the suffrages of a people whose confidence and esteem he had so long exclusively enjoyed. Such is the imperfection of the present state, that the possession of a more than ordinary portion of felicity is the usual forerunner of a correspondent degree of privation and distress; and the removal of a pastor who has long been the object of veneration generally places a church in a critical situation, exposed to feuds and dissensions, arising out of the necessity of a new choice. That of Mr. Toller, notwithstanding his extreme youth, was nearly unanimous. When he first supplied the congregation, nothing was more remote from his expectation than being invited to a permanent residence: his highest ambition was to be tolerated as a transient supply; and when, to his no small surprise, they made choice of him as their stated minister, he entered on that office with that heartfelt conviction of its importance, and unfeigned distrust of his own sufficiency, which are the surest omen of success. He commenced his career with fear and trembling; and, instead of being elated by the preference shown him by a large and respectable society, he was ready to sink under the weight of his responsibility.

Few men probably have been more indebted for the formation of their character to the fervent piety of their audience. Such was the state of his mind at that period, that, had he been connected with a people of an opposite character, his subsequent history would have exhibited, in all probability, features very dis-

similar from those which eventually belonged to it. If, in a lengthened ministerial course, the people are usually formed by their pastor, in the first stage it is the reverse; it is the people who form the minister. Mr. Toller often expressed his gratitude for that merciful providence which united him at so early a period with a people adapted to invigorate his piety, and confirm his attachment to the vital, fundamental truths of christianity. The reciprocal influence of a minister and a congregation on each other, is so incessant, and so powerful, that I would earnestly dissuade an inexperienced youth from connecting himself with a people whose doctrine is erroneous, or whose piety is doubtful, lest he should be tempted to consult his ease by choosing to yield to a current he would find it difficult to resist. To root up error, and reclaim a people from inveterate habits of vice and irreligion, is unquestionably a splendid achievement; but it requires a hardihood of character and decision of principle not often found in young persons.

Little variety must be looked for in the subsequent sketch of Mr. Toller's life. As he travelled little, and seldom mingled in the scenes of public business,—as his habits were domestic and his disposition retired; years glided away, without presenting an occurrence of sufficient magnitude to entitle it to a permanent record. Through a long series of years, he persevered in the exemplary discharge of his spiritual functions, among a people who, in proportion as his talents unfolded themselves, regarded him with increasing love and veneration, as well on account of his ministerial qualifications, as his amiable, prudent, and consistent deportment. He was the centre of union to a large and an extensive circle of ministers and of people, who, however they might differ in other particulars, unanimously concurred in their admiration of his talents, and their esteem of his virtues. He was surrounded by friends who vied with each other in demonstrations of respect, and by an audience who looked forward to each succeeding sabbath as to a mental feast, and who hung upon his lips with an attention which might have tempted a stranger to

suppose they were hearing him for the first time or the last. From the commencement of his residence at Kettering, the attachment of his people went on still increasing, till it arrived at a point beyond which it would have been idolatry. This extraordinary attachment must be ascribed partly to the impression produced by his public services, and partly to the gentleness and amenity of his private manners. It may be possible to find other preachers equally impressive, and other men equally amiable; but such a combination of the qualities calculated to give the ascendant to a public speaker, with those which inspire the tenderness of private friendship, is of rare occurrence.

The leisure which the retired and tranquil tenour of his life secured, he employed in the perusal of the best authors in our language, which, by continually adding to his mental stores, imparted to his ministry an ample and endless variety. Although he almost invariably preached from notes composed in short-hand, his immediate preparations for the pulpit, there is reason to believe, were neither long nor laborious. His discourses were not the painful productions of a barren mind, straining itself to meet the exigencies of the moment; but, gathered from a rich and cultivated soil, they were a mere scantling of the abundance which was left behind. He considered every new accession to the stock of his ideas, every effort of reflection, as a preparation for the pulpit; and looked upon those who are necessitated to afford a portion of periodical instruction every week, without having accumulated mental stores, as in much the same situation with the Israelites who were doomed to produce their tale of bricks without straw. Preachers of this description may, indeed, amass a heap of glittering and misplaced ornaments, or "beat the air" with the flourishes of a tumid, unmeaning rhetoric; but the deficiency of real matter, of solid information, cannot fail eventually, to consign them to contempt. Whether Mr. Toller was ever a severe student, or ever was engaged in a regular and systematic pursuit of the different branches of literature or of science, I cannot ascertain;

but that he was much devoted to reading is matter of notoriety. By the incessant accumulation of fresh materials, he became "a scribe well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of God," and, "like a wise householder," was enabled "to bring out of his treasures things new and old." The settlement of Mr. Fuller, the venerable secretary of the Baptist Mission, in the same place, by giving scope to a virtuous emulation, was probably equally beneficial to both parties. From the absence of competition, and the abundance of leisure attending a country retirement, the mental faculties are in danger of slumbering; the rust of sloth too often blunts their edge, and impairs their brightness; which nothing could be more fitted to counteract, than the presence of such a man as Mr. Fuller, distinguished for constitutional ardour and industry.

In the year 1793, he entered into the married state with Miss Elizabeth Gale, the eldest daughter of Mr. William Gale, who then resided at Cranford, in the neighbourhood of Kettering. By this lady he had two children; John, who died in his infancy, and Thomas, who still survives him, and, under the most pleasing auspices, succeeds his father in the pastoral office. During the short period of this union, he appears to have enjoyed the highest degree of connubial felicity; but, not long after the birth of her second child, Mrs. Toller betrayed symptoms of consumption, and, after languishing a considerable time under the attack of that incurable malady, through the whole of which her ardent attachment to her husband, and profound submission to the will of God, were most conspicuous, she expired on the 15th of September, 1796.

It was about this period of his life that my acquaintance with him commenced. I had known him previously, and occasionally heard him; but it was at a season when I was not qualified to form a correct estimate of his talents. At the time referred to, we were engaged to preach a double lecture at Thrapstone, nine miles from Kettering; and never shall I forget the pleasure and surprise with which I listened to an expos-

itory discourse from 1 Peter ii. 1—3. The richness, the unction, the simple majesty, which pervaded his address, produced a sensation I never felt before: it gave me a new view of the christian ministry. But the effect, powerful as it was, was not to be compared with that which I experienced a few days after, on hearing him at the half-yearly association at Bedford. The text which he selected was peculiarly solemn and impressive: his discourse was founded on 2 Peter i. 12—15: "Yea, I think it meet as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle; even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me," &c. The effect of this discourse on the audience, was such as I have never witnessed before or since. It was undoubtedly very much aided by the peculiar circumstances of the speaker, who was judged to be far advanced in a decline, and who seemed to speak under a strong impression of its being the last time he should address his brethren on such an occasion. The aspect of the preacher, pale, emaciated, standing apparently on the verge of eternity, the simplicity and majesty of his sentiments, the sepulchral solemnity of a voice which seemed to issue from the shades, combined with the intrinsic dignity of the subject, perfectly quelled the audience with tenderness and terror, and produced such a scene of audible weeping as was perhaps never surpassed. All other emotions were absorbed in devotional feeling: it seemed to us as though we were permitted for a short space to look into eternity, and every sublunary object vanished before "the powers of the world to come." Yet there was no considerable exertion, no vehemence displayed by the speaker, no splendid imagery, no magnificent description: it was the simple domination of truth, of truth indeed of infinite moment, borne in upon the heart by a mind intensely alive to its reality and grandeur. Criticism was disarmed; the hearer felt himself elevated to a region which it could not penetrate; all was powerless submission to the master-spirit of the scene.

It will be always considered, by those who witnessed it, as affording as high a specimen as can be easily conceived of the power of a preacher over his audience, the habitual, or even frequent recurrence of which, would create an epoch in the religious history of the world.

During this interview, he was invited by the writer of these lines to pay a visit to his friends at Cambridge: with that invitation he shortly after complied. His health had long been much impaired, and serious apprehensions had been entertained, by others as well as by himself, of his being far advanced in a decline. By his excursion to Cambridge, however, in the course of which he met with the most flattering attentions from all quarters, his spirits were revived, his health improved, and from that time the symptons of disease gradually subsided. During his visit, he afforded the people at Cambridge and its vicinity several opportunities of hearing him; and on no occasion was he heard without admiration and delight: for, though no single discourse was equally impressive with that which was delivered at Bedford, he sustained, to the full, the high reputation he had acquired; nor will the numerous and respectable congregations he addressed ever cease to consider this as one of the most favoured seasons of their lives. From that time his celebrity as a preacher was diffused through a much wider circle than before; he began universally to be esteemed one of the most distinguished ministers of the age; a character which he maintained with undiminished lustre to the end of his life.

He continued a widower till the year 1803, when he took for his second wife Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of Mr. William Wilkinson of Northampton, by whom he had five children, Richard, William, Joseph, Henry, and George, all of whom, together with their mother survive him. To what degree this union contributed to the happiness of the latter stages of his life, the delicacy due to a most amiable woman, whose humility renders her as averse to receive praises as she is careful to deserve them, forbids me to say. Suffice it to observe that,

notwithstanding the disparity of years, there never was a connexion which more completely realized the highest anticipations of the friends of both parties.

In the year 1799, the congregation assembling in Carter-lane, London, under the pastoral care of the excellent Mr. Taylor, wanting a supply for one part of the day, applied to Mr. Toller, and offered him, for one service only, a salary considerably beyond what he then enjoyed. To this invitation he gave a decided negative. In the beginning of the following year, the congregation at Clapham gave him a similar invitation, which he also declined. The two congregations then united their invitations, offering a large salary on condition of his undertaking a single service at each place. This joint application he refused. The people of Kettering, hearing of these repeated attempts to remove him, became justly alarmed; a few of them waited upon him, informing him of the uneasiness they felt at the repeated attempts which had been made, and were still making, to effect a separation. They assured him of his entire possession of the hearts of his people, and that, though their situation did not permit their making such proposals as the other parties, they would do all in their power, and most gladly rectify any circumstances which gave him uneasiness. His reply was, that, if he found his services still acceptable, no pecuniary advantages should ever tempt him to relinquish his charge. At the same time he intimated that, as the two congregations still persisted in their application, he wished his people publicly to express their sentiments on the subject, that he might be armed with conclusive reasons for declining invitations so earnestly and repeatedly urged. This gave occasion to three separate addresses, from the young people, from the members of the Benevolent Society, and from the congregation at large, each expressive of the high esteem they entertained for his character, their sense of the benefit derived from his ministry, and their extreme reluctance to resign advantages which they so highly prized. To these addresses a most affectionate and appropriate reply was made by their pastor, in

which he assured them of his unalterable attachment, together with his final determination to accede to their wishes; and thus ended the last attempt to remove Mr. Toller from his station.

The reader will naturally be surprised to find that on this occasion no address was presented by the church. As this omission cannot with a shadow of probability be ascribed to indifference on their part, it must be imputed to the church not occupying that rank in the esteem of the auditory to which it is justly entitled. In every christian congregation, the church ought to be regarded as the principal object, to which the auditory are but an appendage, and for a union with which it should be their highest ambition to become qualified. Congregations are the creatures of circumstances; churches the institution of God: and, if we adhere to the maxims and examples of scripture, and of primitive antiquity, in all religious proceedings their judgement will first be consulted, and their official character recognised. But here we meet with a transaction of great moment, in which three classes of persons, to which no function is assigned in the New Testament, act a conspicuous part, while the church is wholly overlooked. My reason for animadverting on this procedure is, that, in the economy of modern dissenters, a growing tendency may be perceived to merge the church in the congregation, and to commit the management of the most weighty matters to a body of subscribers in preference to the members; an innovation, should it generally prevail, productive of incalculable evils. Many of those who compose the auditors, in distinction from the church, may possess genuine piety; but while they persist in declining to make a public profession of Christ, it is scarcely possible for them to give proof of it: the greater part, it is no breach of candour to suppose, are men of the world; and, surely, it requires little penetration to perceive the danger which religion must sustain, by transferring the management of its concerns from persons decidedly religious to those whose pretensions to interfere are founded solely on pecuniary considerations. The presumptuous

intermeddling of worldly, unsanctified spirits, with ecclesiastical concerns, has been the source of almost every error in doctrine, and enormity in practice, that has deformed the profession of christianity from the time of Constantine to the present day; nor is dissent of much importance, except as far as it affords an antidote to this evil. The system which confounds the distinction between the church and the congregation has long since been carried to perfection in the Presbyterian denomination; and we all know what preceded, and what has followed that innovation.—the decay of piety, the destruction of discipline, a most melancholy departure, in a word, both in principle and in practice, from genuine christianity.

No event contributed more to make Mr. Toller extensively known beyond the limits of the dissenting connexion, than the active part which he took in promoting the objects of the Bible Society. Strongly impressed with the truth of our Lord's declaration, that "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation," and constitutionally averse to every thing noisy and ostentatious, it was rarely that he could be prevailed upon to engage in those popular religious societies, the existence of which may be said to constitute an era in the history of religion. Of societies even formed for the propagation of christianity in foreign parts, he was more disposed to admire the zeal that animated the exertions, than to anticipate the success, having formed an opinion that the final triumph of the gospel over paganism was destined to be effected by the renewal of those miraculous gifts which attended its first promulgation.

But the Bible Society, by the simplicity of its object, and the comprehensive catholicism of its constitution, so consonant to the unbounded liberality of his views, commanded his unqualified approbation; and having been chosen one of the secretaries for the Northern Auxiliary Branch, in the county of Northampton, from its first formation, he directed the entire force of his mind to it; attending regularly, as long as his health would permit, the various meetings held in the vicinity. The sensa-

tion produced by his speech at the first meeting at Northampton, where his grace the Duke of Grafton presided, will never be forgotten. Departing from the usual practice on such occasions, he addressed a considerable part of it to the noble chairman, contrasting his then situation with that which he occupied in the House of Lords; a task which, difficult as it was, he performed with a dignity, pathos, and decorum, that astonished and delighted the audience. Its effect on the duke himself was to draw tears from his eyes, and induce him to double his original donation. In strokes of sudden pathos, and unpolished grandeur, Mr. Toller was almost unequalled; and, as his whole soul was engaged in promoting the Bible Society, on no occasion were his peculiar powers displayed to more advantage.

It has been already remarked, that missionary efforts excited, at their commencement, but little of his attention; not because he was indifferent to their object, but from a settled conviction that the conversion of the heathen was not to be effected by ordinary means, but by miraculous interposition. Whether he entirely relinquished that expectation I am not prepared to say; it is certain his views underwent some modification upon that subject. The astonishing progress of the Bible Society in circulating the Scriptures throughout the world,—the unparalleled exertions of Dr. Carey, and of others, in translating them into the principal languages of the East, and the success of the London Missionary Society in Africa and the South Sea, where whole tribes and nations have been led, by a simultaneous impulse, to abandon their idols, and to worship the one living and true God, opened a new prospect, and convinced him that the general emancipation of the pagan world from the power of darkness, might be accomplished without that supernatural agency which he formerly deemed indispensable. A pertinacious adherence to one mode of thinking, in spite of superior evidence, was no part of his character; and, though not very apt to change his opinion on subjects on which he had long exercised his mind, his firmness was untinctured with obstinacy.

During the greater portion of his life, he was occasionally liable to great depression of spirits; but, about seven years previous to its close, in consequence of a sudden interruption of the profuse perspiration which had constantly attended his public exercises, and which was thrown back upon the system, he sunk into such a state of despondency as disqualified him, for some time, for the discharge of his ministerial functions. His mind, during this season, was harassed with the most distressing apprehensions of a future state, and possessed with such a view of his pollution, in the sight of a holy God, that he was tempted to suppose all his past experience in religion was delusive. Of his state of mind during this melancholy period, I know not whether he has left any written account; but I recollect, when adverting to it in familiar conversation, he described it as a year of almost incessant weeping and prayer. Though none who were acquainted with him will entertain a doubt of the sincerity of his piety previous to that afflictive visitation, as little can it be doubted that it was a source of great spiritual improvement, that he "did business in the mighty waters," and that he was brought to a more profound knowledge of himself, and a more deep and humble reliance on the power and grace of the Redeemer, than he had before experienced. From that time his discourses were more thoroughly imbued with the peculiarities of the gospel, his doctrinal views more clear and precise, and his whole conversation and deportment such as announced a rapid advance in spirituality. That generality in his statements of revealed truth, which was the consequence of his education at Daventry, and which almost invariably characterized the pupils of that seminary, totally disappeared, and he attained "to all the riches of the full assurance of the mystery of God the Father and of Christ." Though he survived that affliction several years, it probably shortened his life, by giving that concussion to his nervous system from which he never perfectly recovered; and from that time the circulation of his blood appears to have been less regu-

lar, and the depression of his spirits more frequent than before.

In the year 1813, the friends of Mr. Toller determined to carry into effect an idea which had before been suggested, that of raising a sum of money to be presented as a testimony of their esteem, as well as with a view to lay the basis of a permanent provision for his family. As soon as he had intelligence of the design, he, in a letter to a gentleman who had taken an active part in the affair, communicated very freely his sentiments on the occasion, in which, without positively declining it, he suggested some objections to the measure, intimating his fear that, by occasioning a diversity of sentiment on its propriety, it might destroy that harmony and cordiality of feeling which had so long prevailed in his connexions. It breathes such a spirit of tenderness, humility, and modesty, that I cannot doubt the reader will be gratified by its insertion.* It is almost unnecessary to add, that the apprehensions and scruples which arose from his extreme delicacy were overruled, and a sum amounting to nearly a thousand pounds was contributed, with a promptitude and alacrity which did equal honour to those who conferred and to him who received the favour. When it is recollected that he had repeatedly resisted the most earnest solicitations to remove to a superior situation, and was charged with the care of a numerous and increasing family, the whole transaction cannot fail to impress the reader with admiration of the liberality in which the donation originated, and of the delicate reluctance with which it was accepted. The desire of wealth never took possession of his mind. Contented and thankful for that decent competence which he was at no time suffered to want, he was frugal without being parsimonious, and generous without profusion.

The system of his life was eminently uniform and tranquil, distinguished by few of the events and vicissitudes which are adapted in the recital to amuse or to

* See p. 315.

agitate the reader. In the summer months he frequently rose at a very early hour, and was often met in his solitary walks in the neighbouring woods, by peasants who were "going forth to their work and to their labour till the evening." In these silent and retired scenes he took great delight; and from his observation of the beauties of nature, and the operations of husbandry, he frequently derived those images and illustrations which furnished a rich repast for his audience. Possessed of great sensibility, and a rich and lively imagination, he was accustomed, more than almost any other man, to clothe the abstractions of religion in the garb of sensible images, to illustrate his conceptions by frequent allusions to the most striking scenes in nature and in life. What is said of our Lord may almost be affirmed of him, that he taught the people in parables, and without a parable he spake not unto them. Truth compels me to confess that he sometimes carried this peculiarity to excess; but along with this concession it is but justice to observe, that the habit of appealing to the imagination was not only admirably adapted to a numerous class of subjects, but greatly contributed to that power of delectation which so eminently distinguished his ministry. His discourses were never vapid, tedious, or uninteresting. A certain intensity of devotional feeling, a deep and solemn pathos, accompanied with tones expressive of the greatest sensibility, sustained the attention of the audience in full vigour.

It was his custom, during the greater part of his ministry, to devote the morning service to exposition, in the course of which he went very much at large through the life of Moses and of Christ, each of which occupied him several years. A great part of both Testaments was thus brought before the minds of his hearers. He was strongly impressed with a conviction of the advantages resulting from that mode of instruction, by its affording a more ample variety of topics, imparting a more profound and extensive acquaintance with the Scriptures, and enabling the teacher of religion to introduce many practical remarks, many minute points and details, which

however useful in the conduct of life, would with difficulty find a place in a regular discourse. It is evident from the writings of the Fathers, that this was the primitive mode of preaching, handed down to the christian church from the Jewish synagogue; and, wherever a people are more desirous of acquiring real knowledge than of a momentary excitement, it will be decidedly preferred. Unhappily, the taste of most hearers is the reverse: they are a sort of spiritual epicures, who prefer a poignant and stimulating, to a simple and nourishing diet, and would infinitely rather have their passions awakened than their conscience directed, or their understanding enlarged.

For this reason, expositions will generally be preferred by the intelligent part of an audience, and sermons by a promiscuous multitude. The peculiar talents of Mr. Toller qualified him, above most men, for combining the advantages of both methods, by infusing that degree of pathos and animation into his expository lectures which rendered them little less affecting than his sermons. Though he possessed, there is reason to believe, a competent knowledge of the Scriptures in their original tongues, yet from condescension to his audience, and his extreme abhorrence of whatever savours of pedantry, he was sparing of critical remarks, and availed himself less of the advantages of a liberal education and of incessant reading, for exact interpretations of the sacred volume, than he might with unexceptionable propriety have done. His expositions were practical and popular, not critical or elaborate. In order to preserve a unity of design, and to perpetuate an identity of impression, it was his usual practice to select some portion of the paragraph which he had been expounding in the former part of the day, as the basis of the afternoon discourse.

It would be great injustice to the memory of my invaluable friend, while speaking of his ministerial qualifications, not to mention his striking superiority in the discharge of the devotional part of his public functions, his almost unrivalled eminence in prayer. His addresses to the Supreme Being united every excellence of which they

are susceptible; they were copious without being redundant, fervent without extravagance, elevated without the least appearance of turgidity or pomp. He poured out his whole soul in an easy unaffected flow of devotional sentiment; adoration seemed to be his natural element; and, as he appeared to lose all consciousness of any other presence but that of the Deity, he seldom failed to raise his audience to the same elevation, to make them realize the feeling of Jacob, when he exclaimed, "How awful is this place!" If this encomium admits of any abatement it must be on the ground of their length, which was not unfrequently equal to that of his sermons. Nor was he less admirable in family devotion: many a time have I been surprised at the promptitude, ease, and grace, with which he would advert to the peculiar circumstances of the family, or of its principal members, with an allusion sometimes to minute incidents, without once impairing the solemnity, or detracting from the dignity, which ought ever to accompany a religious exercise. His petitions in behalf of each individual were stamped with something exclusively proper to his situation or character, so that, while he was concurring in an act of social worship, he felt, ere he was aware, as if he were left alone with God.

In his public discourses, he was apt to limit himself too much for time, either to do full justice to his subject, or to prolong the impression until it had completely incorporated itself with the mind of the hearer: the curtain was let fall at the moment the scene was most interesting; and the current of emotion suddenly checked and interrupted, when it was just rising to its height. The mind is so constituted, that, in order to produce a permanent effect, a train of thought, however interesting, must occupy the attention for a considerable space: the soul kindles by degrees, and must pass through successive gradations of feeling before it reaches the utmost elevation of sublime and pathetic emotion. Hence it is that the most powerful speakers, in every age, have had recourse to a frequent repetition of the same arguments and topics, quite useless on any other account than its

tendency to prolong the impression, and to render it by that means more durable and intense. Had Mr. Toller paid more attention to this principle of our constitution, I will not say he would have been a more interesting and delightful preacher,—for it is not easy to conceive how his sermons could have been much more impressive than they frequently were, during their delivery,—but their power over the audience would probably have been more lasting and more salutary. The defect which we have taken the liberty of noticing, may perhaps be ascribed to the habit of writing his sermons, a practice more favourable to accuracy of language, and condensation of thought, than to copiousness and expansion.

But it is time to return to our narrative, which a few words will despatch. During several of the last years of his life, our excellent friend exhibited symptoms of a tendency to apoplexy; and in the year 1819, as he was going to his study, he was seized with a fit, which appeared instantly to deprive him of all sensation, to the inexpressible alarm of his family. But, before medical aid could be procured, his bodily strength and the possession of his mental powers were restored, and in two hours he displayed no indications of the awful event, except a degree of lassitude, and a slight contortion in the muscles about the mouth, both of which shortly disappeared. This circumstance, it is remarked by one of his friends, afforded a melancholy confirmation of their fears. They had long apprehended the seeds of apoplexy were lurking in his constitution, so that they looked upon this visitation as a voice from God, preparing them, by no doubtful warning, for the speedy dissolution of a connexion which had long been the source of so much improvement and delight.

The circumstances attending the last scene of his life, I cannot give better than in the words of a respectable friend from whom I received the account. "He had," says the writer of the following narrative, "for many years supposed it probable he should be subject to apoplexy or palsy. His fears fixed on the latter: and to his nearest friends he has often said, in allusion to these

apprehensions, 'I do not fear, on the whole, to die; nor do I fear, I hope, to suffer, if I may but have the needful support from God; but if I am doomed to a long scene of suffering, and to become a burden to myself and friends, I do fear that faith and patience may fail, and that I may at last dishonour the cause I have preached, and the Master whom I serve and love." The attack which has been mentioned removed the fear of palsy almost entirely: he was convinced the disorder was apoplexy; and the consequent conviction that such probably would be his end,—that, without pain or long affliction, he should, when his great Master had done with his services, be thus kindly dismissed,—had an immediate and an exhilarating effect upon his mind. After this he had frequent seizures of the same kind, which lasted for a very short time, seldom more than five minutes in the whole; but they left evident traces on his bodily frame, though they had no other effect upon his mind than to confirm his hope of immediate dismission, "when his work was done." Near the close of the year 1820, one of these attacks left him so weak and shattered in constitution as to convince him he should never be able to resume his full pastoral duties again; and he in a very affectionate manner, communicated this conviction to his people. They immediately sought an assistant, and most naturally turned their attention to the son of their beloved pastor, who had been preaching at Wem, in Shropshire, for some time, but at that moment was visiting his father, to whom he had hurried, in dreadful doubt, from the account that he had received, whether he should see his face any more. From this attack he gradually recovered, and continued for some weeks to gain strength. On Sunday, the 25th of February, he preached in the morning with all his usual animation, from Isa. lxiii. 7—13, and remarked, at the close of the discourse, what encouragement this passage affords the widow and the fatherless to put their trust in God, finishing his last public discourse with these words:

'To thee our infant race we leave;
Them may their fathers' God receive,
That ages yet unborn may raise
Successive hymns of humble praise.'

He spent the evening surrounded by his family, and conversing with his children in a strain of cheerful piety; and, after a night of sound repose, arose as well as usual the next morning. About noon, leaving the parlour, he was found, a few minutes after, in an apoplectic fit, or a seizure resembling apoplexy. Several medical men repaired to the spot, but life was extinct."

His remains were interred in the burying-ground belonging to the meeting-house, on Thursday, the 8th of March. On that occasion, the Rev. Mr. Horsey, of Northampton, engaged in prayer; the Rev. Mr. Edwards, of the same place, delivered the funeral oration; and the writer of these lines endeavoured to improve the providence by a suitable discourse. A considerable number of the clergy in the vicinity, and nearly all the dissenting ministers of the county, attended the procession, which was rendered deeply affecting by the tears of a vast assembly, consisting of all the respectable inhabitants of the town, who felt, on this occasion, that they had lost a father and a friend.

Having already glanced at the most distinguishing features in the character of Mr. Toller, an elaborate delineation of it will neither be necessary nor expected.

It is remarkable, that though he invariably delivered his sermons from notes, to which he strictly adhered, his style of composition was eminently colloquial; it had all the careless ease, negligence, and occasional inaccuracy, which might be looked for in an extemporaneous address. He appears never to have turned his attention to composition as an art; and the force and beauty with which he sometimes expressed himself, was the spontaneous effect of a vivid imagination, accompanying the truest sensibility. His most affecting illustrations (and the power of illustrating a subject was his distinguishing faculty) were drawn from the most familiar scenes of life; and, after he became a father, not

unfrequently from the incidents which attach to that relation. An example of this (supplied by the friend whose words have been already quoted) will afford the reader some idea of the manner in which he availed himself of images drawn from the domestic circle. His text was Isaiah xxvii. 5:—"Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." "I think," said he, "I can convey the meaning of this passage so that every one may understand it, by what took place in my own family within these few days. One of my little children had committed a fault for which I thought it my duty to chastise him. I called him to me, explained to him the evil of what he had done, and told him how grieved I was that I must punish him for it. He heard me in silence, and then rushed into my arms, and burst into tears. I could sooner have cut off my arm than have then struck him for his fault: he had taken hold of my strength, and he had made peace with me."

He possessed great originality, not so much however in the stamina of his thoughts, as in the cast of his imagination. He seldom reminded you of any other speaker to whom he bore the slightest resemblance; his excellences and his defects rendered it equally evident that he had formed himself on no preceding model,—that he yielded without restraint to the native bias of his character and genius. The effect of imitation would, undoubtedly, have been the acquisition of more elegance and correctness, probably at the expense of higher qualities—of that noble simplicity and careless grandeur which were the distinguishing features of his eloquence. In the power of awakening pathetic emotions, he far excelled any speaker it has been my lot to hear. Often have I seen a whole congregation melted under him like wax before the sun: my own feelings, on more than one occasion, have approached to an overpowering agitation. The effect was produced apparently with perfect ease. No elaborate preparation, no peculiar vehemence or intensity of tones, no artful accumulation of pathetic images led the way: the mind was captivated and sub-

dued, it scarcely knew how. Though it will not be imagined that this triumph of popular eloquence could be habitual, much less constant, it may be safely affirmed that a large proportion of Mr. Toller's discourses afforded some indication of these powers.

Of the personal character of the subject of these memoirs, it may be observed, in general, that it was marked by none of the eccentricities which are supposed to be the appendages of genius, and that it consisted of a combination of amiable and pleasing, rather than of striking qualities. Candour, in all the modes of its operation, was a conspicuous feature. As his affection was extended to all, without exception, who "love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," so he was particularly ingenious in putting the best construction on unfavourable appearances, in extenuating what he could not justify, and in discovering reasons for hoping well of those whom the honest but untempered zeal of many good men would prompt them to condemn. It was his delight to narrow the grounds of debate among sincere christians, to multiply the points of contact, and to detect the indications of spiritual consanguinity and of a common origin, amidst the discrepancies which arise from real diversity of sentiment in some instances, and a diversity of language in more. Whether this benevolent solicitude to comprehend within the pale of salvation as many as possible, may not sometimes have led him to extenuate the danger of speculative error too much, may be fairly questioned. Since the charity which the Scriptures so earnestly inculcate, consists in a real solicitude for the welfare of others, not in thinking well of their state, he cannot be justly accused of a violation of its dictates, who contends that those doctrines are essential to salvation, on which his own hopes of it are exclusively founded.

There is another branch of candour which was eminently exemplified in the subject of the preceding Memoir. His tenderness in whatever concerned individual reputation was remarkable. He felt as much solicitude about the character of the absent as the feelings of the

present: the wanton depreciation of their intellect or their virtue gave him visible pain; and, where he could not speak favourably of either, he was silent. Having no passion for display, he was never tempted to sacrifice his friend to his jest: his gayest sallies never inflicted a pang, nor occasioned a blush. His humour was a gentle and lambent flame, which cheered and exhilarated, but never scorched. Hence few men possessed more friends, or fewer enemies: it may be doubted whether, among the numerous lists of the former, he lost the esteem of one. The friends of his youth who did not descend into the grave before him were the delight and solace of his age; and, in proportion as their ranks were thinned, he wisely consulted his happiness by cultivating the affection of a succeeding generation, by which he escaped that solitude and desertion which is the lot of those who shut their hearts against new attachments, neglect the good within their reach in a hopeless attempt to grasp a phantom, and perversely refuse to attach a value to any other pleasures than those which have withered under the blast of death.

It was not his practice to devote much of his time to ministerial visits. In justification of this part of his conduct, he was accustomed to quote the apostolic injunction: "Is any sick among you? let him *call* for the elders of the church," &c. He possessed, or fancied he possessed, little talent for the ordinary topics of religious conversation; and his extreme aversion to the ostentation of spirituality rendered him somewhat reluctant to engage in those recitals of christian experience in which many professors so much delight. There adhered to his natural disposition a delicacy and reserve, which rendered it impossible for him to disclose, except in the most confidential intercourse, the secret movements and aspirations of his heart towards the best of beings.

He possessed, notwithstanding this, a high relish for the pleasures of society. An inexhaustible fund of anecdote, which he was wont to relate with a dry and comic humour, rendered him, in his livelier moments, a most fascinating companion. A great versatility of fea-

tures combined with much power of imitation to give a peculiar poignance to the different incidents of his story. His imitations however were *specific*, not individual, seldom if ever descending to personal mimickry—an illiberal art, more befitting the buffoon than the christian or the gentleman. Mr. Toller's indulgence of these sallies was occasional, not habitual; they formed at times the seasoning of his conversation, not the staple commodity; and never were they carried so far as to impair the dignity of his character, or the reverence inspired by his virtues. They were invariably such as a virgin might listen to without a blush, and a saint without a sigh.

Mr. Toller was much of a practical philosopher Deeply convinced of the vanity and imperfection of the present state, which he considered less as a scene of enjoyment than as a perpetual conflict with unavoidable evils, he was always disposed to make the best of passing events; to yield where resistance was unavailing; to beguile the sorrows which he could not remove; and, by setting the good against the evil, to blunt the arrows of adversity, and disarm disappointment of its sting. Possessing a genuine but not a sickly sensibility, he [showed it rather] in enduring the vicissitudes of life with equanimity, than in any excessive delicacy or refinement of feeling.

"Speak evil of no man" is an injunction of which he never lost sight; and, without assuming the severity of reproof, he well knew how, by an expressive silence, to mark his aversion to scandal. He showed a constant solicitude to give no offence to Jew or Gentile, or the household of God. Hence the efficacy of his ministry was never obstructed or impaired by the personal prejudice of his hearers, who regarded him not only with the deference due to a zealous and enlightened teacher, but with the affection of a friend. He was an ardent lover of peace. On no occasion did he offend by haughtiness, negligence, the indulgence of a capricious humour, or the sallies of intemperate anger. It has been asserted, by some that knew him in early life, that his original dispo-

sition was hasty and irritable. If this was the case, he affords a striking example of the conquest of religion and philosophy over the early tendencies of nature, since few men were equally distinguished by an unaffected sweetness and serenity of temper.

During every period of my acquaintance with him, he exhibited the most decided indications of piety; but in the latter stages of his life, this part of his character shone with distinguished lustre: devotion appeared to be his habitual element. Seldom has religion presented more of the lovely and attractive than in the character of Mr. Toller: if it did not inflame him with the zeal which distinguished more active and enterprising spirits, it melted him into love, clothed him with humility, and decked him, in an eminent degree, with the "ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit."

It has rarely been the privilege of one town, and that not of considerable extent, to possess at the same time and for so long a period, two such eminent men as Mr. Toller and Mr. Fuller. Their merits as christian ministers were so equal, and yet so different, that the exercise of their religious functions in the same place was as little adapted to produce jealousy as if they had moved in distant spheres. The predominant feature in the intellectual character of Mr. Fuller was the power of discrimination, by which he detected the minutest shades of difference among objects which most minds would confound: Mr. Toller excelled in exhibiting the common sense of mankind in a new and impressive form. Mr. Fuller never appeared to so much advantage as when occupied in detecting sophistry, repelling objections, and ascertaining with a microscopic accuracy the exact boundaries of truth and error: Mr. Toller attached his attention chiefly to those parts of christianity which come most into contact with the imagination and the feelings, over which he exerted a sovereign ascendency. Mr. Fuller convinced by his arguments; Mr. Toller subdued by his pathos. The former made his hearers feel the grasp of his intellect; the latter, the contagion of his sensibility. Mr. Fuller's discourses identified themselves,

after they were heard, with trains of thought; Mr. Toller's with trains of emotion. The illustrations employed by Mr. Fuller (for he also excelled in illustration) were generally made to subserve the clearer comprehension of his subject; those of Mr. Toller consisted chiefly of appeals to the imagination and the heart. Mr. Fuller's ministry was peculiarly adapted to detect hypocrites, to expose fallacious pretensions to religion, and to separate the precious from the vile; he sat as "the refiner's fire and the fuller's soap:" Mr. Toller was most in his element when exhibiting the consolations of Christ, dispelling the fears of death, and painting the prospects of eternity. Both were original: but the originality of Mr. Fuller appeared chiefly in his doctrinal statements; that of Mr. Toller in his practical remarks. The former was unquestionably most conversant with speculative truth; the latter perhaps possessed the deeper insight into the human heart.

Nor were the characters of these eminent men, within the limits of that moral excellence which was the attribute of both, less diversified than their mental endowments. Mr. Fuller was chiefly distinguished by the qualities which command veneration; Mr. Toller by those which excite love. Laborious, zealous, intrepid, Mr. Fuller passed through a thousand obstacles in the pursuit of objects of public interest and utility; Mr. Toller loved to repose, delighting and delighted, in the shade of domestic privacy. The one lived for the world; the other for the promotion of the good of his congregation, his family, and friends. An intense zeal for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, sustained by industry that never tired, a resolution not to be shaken, and integrity incapable of being warped, conjoined to a certain austerity of manner, were the leading characteristics of Mr. Fuller: gentleness, humility, and modesty, those of Mr. Toller. The secretary of the Baptist Mission attached, in my opinion, too much importance to a speculative accuracy of sentiment; while the subject of this Memoir leaned to the contrary extreme. Mr. Fuller was too prone to infer the character of men from their

creed; Mr. Toller to lose sight of their creed in their character. Between persons so dissimilar, it was next to impossible a very close and confidential intimacy should subsist: a sincere admiration of each other's talents, and esteem for the virtues which equally adorned them both, secured without interruption, for more than thirty years, those habits of kind and respectful intercourse which had the happiest effect in promoting the harmony of their connexions and the credit of religion.

Much as Mr. Fuller was lamented by the religious public in general, and especially in his own denomination, I have reason to believe there was not a single individual, out of the circle of his immediate relatives, who was more deeply affected by his death than Mr. Toller. From that moment he felt himself nearer to eternity; he accepted the event as a most impressive warning of his own dissolution; and, while a thousand solemn and affecting recollections accompanied the retrospect of a connexion which had so long and so happily subsisted, one of his favourite occupations was to revive a mental intercourse, by the frequent perusal of the sermons of his deceased friend. It is thus that the friendship of high and sanctified spirits loses nothing by death but its alloy: failings disappear, and the virtues of those whose "faces we shall behold no more" appear greater and more sacred when beheld through the shades of the sepulchre. Their spirits are now united before the throne; and if any event in this sublunary scene may be supposed to engage the attention of the subject of this Memoir, in his present mysterious elevation, it is probably the desire that the child of his prayers, who now succeeds him in his office, may surpass his example, and be the honoured instrument of turning more sinners to righteousness, and of conducting more sons to glory, than himself.

MR. TOLLER'S LETTER,

Referred to in p. 301.

My dear Sir,

It would be idle in me to affect ignorance of the business which has principally occasioned your visit to Kettering just now; and though it may seem indelicate to interfere during the discussion of that business, yet I cannot with an easy mind suffer the intended meeting to take place on Monday, without offering a few observations on what may be called, in parliamentary language, "the previous question."

Considering the proposed measure as originating with you and some other friends, I can view it in no other light than as a noble instance of the most unquestionably disinterested friendship and affection; and let the result be what it may, I shall retain a deep and lasting sense of it as such: but, at the same time, I cannot but feel a painful apprehension, that what you mean for nothing but good, should be the incidental occasion of real harm; that is, the probable means of disturbing the harmony and peace which at present exist in my congregation.

There are some amongst us whose inclination would prompt them to support any measure for the benefit of me or my family, but whose general circumstances are, like my own, comfortable and competent: indeed, just sufficient to fill up the annual supply, with a little besides to assist the poor and needy, but who could not advance any thing like a round sum, which would tell on an occasion like this. Some such, I am afraid, would be grieved to contribute nothing; and yet more than a trifle would be a real incon-

venience. There are others in superior circumstances, and by no means backward to do good in the abstract; but who, from education, economical habits, and other causes, have never been accustomed to do so on a large scale; and who, from an apprehension of there being no direct and immediate necessity in the case, would be hurt, and perhaps disgusted, at the suggestion that a handsome sum was expected from them. Now, any instance of this sort would grate more upon my mind than the friendship of others would gratify it; nor could I prevail upon myself to receive a single shilling from a reluctant hand if I knew it, or as the result of solicitation and admonition: and if any thing of the kind goes forward in a way satisfactory to me, it must be on a ground which is hardly attainable, perhaps, in any similar case, namely, that every subscriber be, in the fullest sense, a volunteer; for I can most truly say, that I had a thousand times rather matters should rest as they are, than that the plan should advance a single step at the risk of exciting sensations or producing effects similar to those alluded to above: and therefore, on this ground, if it shall appear to you and other friends prudent to adjourn the further consideration of the business to a future day, be assured that such a resolution will not give me the slightest pain.

I have now told you all my heart, and shall leave the event with Providence and your discretion; only repeating that I shall never cease to admire the principles by which you and others have been actuated, and shall retain a lasting sense of obligation for the kindness of your intention.

I am, with best wishes and prayers,

Yours most affectionately,

THOS. N. TOLLER.

P.S. You are at full liberty to show this letter to whomsoever you think proper: indeed, with that view I write it.

PREFACE TO THE MEMOIRS

OF

THE REV. JOSEPH FREESTON.

[WRITTEN IN 1821.]

OF all the species of literary composition, perhaps biography is the most delightful. The attention concentrated on one individual gives a unity to the materials of which it is composed, which is wanting in general history. The train of incidents through which it conducts the reader suggests to his imagination a multitude of analogies and comparisons; and, while he is following the course of events which mark the life of him who is the subject of the narrative, he is insensibly compelled to take a retrospect of his own. In no other species of writing are we permitted to scrutinize the character so exactly, or to form so just and accurate an estimate of the excellencies and defects, the lights and shades, the blemishes and beauties, of an individual mind.

The progress of a human being, in his passage through time to eternity, only requires to be exhibited with fidelity, in order to become an interesting object to a contemplative mind; whatever may have been the moral or intellectual qualities of the individual, and however degraded by vice, or exalted by piety and virtue. Conquests achieved, or objects attained,—conscience cowering under the tyranny of the passions, or asserting her dignity by subjecting them to her sway,—are equally instructive; providing the reader is informed by what steps virtuous

or vicious habits were superinduced, by what stratagems temptation prevailed, or by what efforts and expedients it was repelled. The moral warfare which every rational and accountable creature has to sustain, pregnant with consequences which reach to eternity, possesses an intrinsic and essential importance, totally independent of the magnitude of the events, or the publicity and splendour of the scenes to which it is attached. The moral history of a beggar, which faithfully revealed the interior movements of his mind, and laid open the secret causes which contributed to form and determine his character, might enlarge and enlighten the views of a philosopher. Whatever tends to render our acquaintance with any portion of our species more accurate and profound, is an accession to the most valuable part of our knowledge: and, though to know ourselves has ever been deemed of the most consequence, it may be doubtful whether the power of self-examination is ever exerted with so much vigour as when it is called into action by the exhibition of individual character. The improvement derived from narrative, in this view, will be proportional to the degree in which the objects described, and the incidents related, bear a resemblance to those with which the reader is conversant; and, for this reason, the biography of private persons, though less dazzling, is more instructive to the majority of readers, than that of such as are distinguished by the elevation of their rank and the splendour of their achievements. Few require to be taught the arts by which the favour of princes is conciliated, or the machinations of rival candidates for power defeated; few need to be warned against the errors and mistakes which have produced the loss of battles or the failure of negotiations. Events of this order may fill the imagination, and diffuse their dignity and pathos over the page of history; but they afford little useful instruction to the bulk of mankind. But, when a character selected from the ordinary ranks of life is faithfully and minutely delineated, no effort is requisite to enable us to place ourselves in the same situation: we accompany the subject of the narrative with an interest undiminished by distance, unim-

paired by dissimilarity of circumstances: and, from the efforts by which he surmounted difficulties and vanquished temptations, we derive the most useful practical lessons.

He who desires to strengthen his virtue and purify his principles will always prefer the solid to the specious; will be more disposed to contemplate an example of the unostentatious piety and goodness which all men may obtain, than of those extraordinary achievements to which few can aspire; nor is it the mark of a superior, but rather of a vulgar and superficial taste, to consider nothing as great or excellent, but that which glitters with titles or is elevated by rank.

The biography of such as have been eminent for piety has ever been a favourite species of reading with those who possess a devotional spirit. "As face answers to face in a glass, so does the heart of man to man." To trace the steps by which a piety feeble in its rudiments has attained to maturity,—to observe the holy arts by which devout habits were strengthened and temptations defeated,—to discern the power of truth in purifying and transforming the minds of such as have attained to high degrees of sanctity,—is equally delightful and edifying. To the real christian, experimental religion opens a new world, replete with objects, emotions, and prospects, of which none but those who are taught of God can form any just or adequate conception; and the joys and sorrows, the elevations and depressions, the dangers and escapes, incident to the spiritual warfare, produce in congenial breasts a lively sympathy.

Publications of this nature have accordingly met for the most part with a welcome reception, and have become one of the most popular and powerful instruments of piety. The religious public have long learned to form a just estimate of the Diary of Mr. Williams, of Kidderminster, an industrious and opulent manufacturer, who demonstrated the possibility of combining a prudent attention to commercial pursuits with a splendid exhibition of the christian graces. The masculine sense, the fervent piety, the active benevolence of that most excel-

lent man, will long contribute to enlighten and to animate christians in a private rank, and to shed a lustre on the religious profession. A more perfect example perhaps was never exhibited to the imitation of active tradesmen. A devotion fervent but rational, zeal tempered by the exactest discretion, and a benevolence invariably regulated by the dictates of prudence and justice,—a transparent candour without weakness, and a wisdom without art,—combine to form a living picture of exalted yet attainable excellence.

The Life and Diary of David Brainerd, missionary to the American Indians, exhibits a perfect pattern of the qualities which should distinguish the instructor of rude and barbarous tribes; the most invincible patience and self-denial, the profoundest humility, exquisite prudence, indefatigable industry, and such a devotedness to God, or rather such an absorption of the whole soul in zeal for the divine glory and the salvation of men, as is scarcely to be paralleled since the age of the apostles. Such was the intense ardour of his mind, that it seems to have diffused the spirit of a martyr over the most common incidents of his life. His constitutional melancholy, though it must be regarded as a physical imperfection, imparts an additional interest and pathos to the narrative; since we more easily sympathize with the emotions of sorrow than of joy. There is a monotony in his feelings, it must be acknowledged, and consequently a frequent repetition of the same ideas, which will disgust a fastidious or superficial reader; but it is the monotony of sublimity.

The Life of Fletcher, of Madeley, affords in some respects a parallel, in others a contrast, to that of Brainerd: and it is curious to observe how the influence of natural temperament varies the exhibition of the same principles. With a considerable difference in their religious views, the same zeal, the same spirituality of mind, the same contempt of the world, is conspicuous in the character of each. But the lively imagination, the sanguine complexion of Fletcher, permits him to triumph and exult in the consolatory truths and prospects

of religion. He is a seraph who burns with the ardours of divine love; and spurning the fetters of mortality, he almost habitually seems to have anticipated the rapture of the beatific vision. Brainerd, oppressed with a constitutional melancholy, is chiefly occupied with the thoughts of his pollutions and defects in the eyes of Infinite Purity. His is a mourning and conflicting piety, imbued with the spirit of self-abasement, breathing itself forth in "groanings which cannot be uttered;" always dissatisfied with itself, always toiling in pursuit of a purity and perfection unattainable by mortals. The mind of Fletcher was habitually brightened with gratitude and joy for what he had attained; Brainerd was actuated with a restless solicitude for farther acquisitions. If Fletcher soared to all the heights, it may be affirmed, with equal truth, that Brainerd sounded all the depths, of christian piety; and while the former was regaling himself with fruit from the tree of life, the latter, on the waves of an impetuous sea, was "doing business in the mighty waters."

Both equally delighted and accustomed to lose themselves in the contemplation of the Deity, they seemed to have surveyed that Infinite Object under different aspects; and while Fletcher was absorbed in the contemplation of infinite benignity and love, Brainerd shrunk into nothing in the presence of immaculate purity and holiness.

The different situations in which they were placed, had probably considerable effect in producing or heightening their respective peculiarities. Fletcher exercised his ministry in the calm of domestic life, surrounded with the beauties of nature; Brainerd pursued his mission in a remote and howling wilderness, where, in the midst of uncultivated savages, he was exposed to intolerable hardships and fatigues.

The religious public have lately been favoured with a rich accession to the recorded monuments of exalted piety, in the Life and Religious Experience of the lamented Henry Martyn. It is delightful to behold, in the history of that extraordinary man, talents, which

attracted the admiration of one of the most celebrated seats of learning, consecrated to the honour of the cross; an enterprising genius, in the ardour of youth, relinquishing the pursuit of science and of fame, in order to travel in the steps of a Brainerd and a Schwartz. Crowned with the highest honours a university could bestow, we see him quit the luxurious shades of academic bowers, for a tempestuous ocean and a burning clime,—for a life of peril and fatigue, from which he could expect no other reward than the heroic pleasure of communicating to perishing millions the word of eternal life. He appears to have formed his religious character chiefly on the model of Brainerd: and as he equalled him in his patience, fortitude, humility, and love, so he strictly resembled him in his end. Both, nearly at the same age fell victims to a series of intolerable privations and fatigues, voluntarily incurred in the course of their exertions for the propagation of the faith of Jesus. And though their death was not a violent one, the sacrifices they made, and the sufferings they endured, entitle them to the honours and rewards of a protracted martyrdom. Their memory will be cherished by the veneration of all succeeding ages; and he who reads their lives will be ready to exclaim, '*Here* is the faith and patience of the saints.'

If the biography of men such as these fails to produce all the benefit we might expect, some will be ready to impute it to that hopeless superiority of character which seems to place them almost above the reach of imitation. The justice of the inference, however, may be fairly questioned, since he who proposes for his imitation a model approaching to perfection, though he may not equal, will, probably, in the fervour of his exertions to copy it, take a higher flight than if he had contented himself with the contemplation of an inferior standard. He who forms his taste on the inimitable productions of a Raphael, will reach nearer to perfection than he could arrive by the study of an inferior artist: and, for the purpose of restoring man to the image of his Maker, the wisdom of God has thought

fit to exhibit a faultless model in the character of the incarnate Redeemer.

Before I dismiss the reader to the perusal of the following narrative, it may not be improper to apprize him of what he is to expect. If he hopes to be amused by the recital of striking occurrences and eventful passages, he will find himself disappointed. The following is not the history of a man bustling on the busy stage of life, and exposed to great vicissitudes of good or evil fortune: it is the simple unpretending narrative of a dissenting minister, who passed his days in the retirement of the country, in tranquil meditation, in the exercise of unostentatious piety, and an assiduous attention to the spiritual improvement of his flock. Though he did not enjoy the benefit of a liberal education, my revered friend was possessed of an active inquisitive mind, which prompted him to devote much of his time to reading, and enabled him to acquire a large fund of general, but especially of theological, knowledge. Few men, in similar circumstances, have availed themselves, to an equal extent, of the information which the best books in our language, on moral and religious subjects, supply. Reading, with him, was not merely a habit, but a passion. His curiosity was not limited within the circle of his profession: he was delighted with works on general literature, and purchased and perused some of the valuable elementary treatises on science. But, as devotion was his peculiar element, it is not to be wondered at that theology in its various branches was his favourite study. Though he was far from neglecting the antiquities and the criticism of theology, as far as they are accessible to a mere English scholar, he placed his principal delight in the perusal of works immediately devoted to the inculcation of doctrinal and experimental religion: and in this pursuit his attention was forcibly drawn to the writings of the puritan divines, who, with all their imperfections of style and method, are unquestionably the safest of all uninspired guides. The masculine sense, the profound learning, the rich and unequalled unction of these fathers of the modern

church, exerted a powerful influence on his mind, and greatly contributed to form and mature his character.

Of the great Mr. Howe, who shines in the firmament with a preeminent and unrivalled lustre, he always spoke in terms of just admiration, assigning him that preference among the nonconformist divines, which it is surprising any one should dispute. The reader of the succeeding narrative will perceive, that for many years it was his constant practice to devote a considerable portion of each day to the perusal of the best practical writers; to which, under God, he was undoubtedly indebted for that habitual spirituality of mind which so remarkably distinguished him, and in which very few, whom I have had the happiness of knowing, appeared to equal; none to surpass him. His sense of the divine presence, his relish for devout meditation and intercourse, his advertence to the great realities of a future life, seemed scarcely ever to forsake him; and the least that can be affirmed of him is, that "he walked with God."

Though he exercised his ministry, through the whole of his life, amongst the general baptists, his sentiments approached nearer to those of Mr. Baxter than to the system of Arminius, nor would his statements of christian doctrine have given the slightest offence to a congregation of moderate calvinists. But to polemical theology he was not attached; his religion was entirely of a practical and experimental character: nor did he attach the smallest importance to correct views of christian doctrine, any further than as they tended to influence the heart. To socinianism, in all its modifications he entertained a most hearty and decided aversion, and few circumstances gave him more poignant uneasiness than to see some of the most conspicuous members of his church embrace and patronise that destructive heresy. In the latter years of his life he devoted a considerable portion of his time to composition; and his tract on Socinianism, his Directions and Encouragements for Travellers to Zion, his Advice to a young Minister, with other publications of a similar tendency,—the result of

long experience, of much well-digested reading, and of patient thought,—will perpetuate and enrol his name among the most useful practical writers of the present day. Fond as he was of retirement, he retained a keen relish for the pleasures of society, for which he was eminently fitted by the gentleness of his manners, the amenity of his temper, and the variety of his knowledge. His conversation expressed and inspired serenity and cheerfulness rather than mirth; and he possessed, to a very extraordinary degree, the happy art of mingling a seasoning of piety with his hours of the greatest relaxation. The natural temperament of my revered friend inclined in some degree, I have been informed, to the irascible; but who ever beheld him betrayed for a moment into language or deportment incompatible with the meekness of the gospel? His exquisite sensibility is abundantly conspicuous in the following narrative, nor could it escape the observation of any person who enjoyed much of his intimacy; but it was so directed and refined, by a higher principle, as to become one of the most attractive qualities in his character.

The extreme depression of the manufacture in the place of his residence, was a source of much uneasiness; both by the intense sympathy he felt for the sufferers, and the degree in which it affected his personal resources. It is painful to reflect that a man "of whom the world was not worthy," perhaps never received from his people more than a moiety of the means of his subsistence: and that, after sinking the greater part of his scanty property, he must often have been involved in irretrievable difficulties, but for the casual liberality of friends whom his superior merit had attached. That, in a situation so full of embarrassment and perplexity, he retained a curiosity so eager, a passion for study and inquiry so unabated, as to induce him to spend a large sum of money in the purchase of books, is a decisive proof of his possessing a mind of no ordinary vigour. But I check myself. It was not my intention to write an encomium on the excellent person who is the subject of

the following Memoir, but merely to introduce it to the reader's attention, by a few prefatory remarks; and, having already trespassed too long on his patience, I must be permitted to close, by expressing my earnest prayer that the effect of its perusal on as many as read it, may be to assimilate their minds, in some degree at least, to the character of its excellent and lamented author.

EXTRACT

FROM MR. HALL'S ROUGH NOTES

OF THE

FUNERAL SERMON FOR DR. RYLAND.

Early in life he formed an intimacy with a set of writers, who, however they may push some theoretical views to excess, are eminent for their elevated ideas of the moral character of the Deity, and for the zeal with which they contend for its influence on doctrinal and practical religion. Firm champions of disinterested love, they set themselves, with the greatest ardour, to expose those religious affections which are founded on mere selfishness, and which are excited merely by the conviction their possessors entertain of their having been the object of the divine predilection, without any perception of the excellence and moral beauty of the divine nature. They laid, as the foundation of all vital religion, a perception of moral beauty, a complacency in the Deity on account of his own intrinsic excellence, which, they contend, is a separate principle from mere gratitude for benefits expected or received, however it may enlarge and extend it. The originality displayed by these writers, at the head of whom the celebrated Edwards is placed by universal consent,—the acumen of their logic, and the fervour of their piety,—seized powerfully on the mind of Dr. Ryland in his early years, and gave a decisive turn to his subsequent studies and pursuits. From that time to the close of his life, the relation which christianity bears

to the display of the divine character was ever present to his thoughts: he delighted in whatever tended to deepen and enlarge his conceptions of that ineffable original; he delighted especially to contemplate him under the character in which John presents him, when he affirms that "God is love,"—as a being possessing an infinite propensity to impart his "fulness," by diffusing the greatest possible sum of happiness throughout his vast dominions. These lofty musings were, with him, not the object of speculation only, or the discriminating features of a creed. He formed the interior of his character upon them; they were his mental aliment, and intimately incorporated with his thoughts. Nor can it be doubted that, in a mind so prepared by divine grace as was his, they exercised a most [beneficial] influence, and produced a luxuriant crop of christian virtues. He appeared to be penetrated with a perpetual sense of the divine presence; not as a source of terror or dismay, but of habitual peace, confidence, and joy. "He endured as seeing him that is invisible." His love to the Great Supreme was equally exempt from slavish timidity and presumptuous familiarity. It was an awful love, such, in a very inferior degree, as the beatific vision must be supposed to inspire, trembling with ecstasy, while prostrate with awe

[*Compare the above with* pp. 64, 65, *and* 56, Vol. V.]

AN ADDRESS,

CIRCULATED AT THE FORMATION OF THE LEICESTER AUXILIARY BIBLE SOCIETY, FEBRUARY 19, 1810.

We feel peculiar satisfaction in announcing to the public the formation of an Auxiliary Bible Society at Leicester, the object of which is, to co-operate with the Parent Society in London, in giving as extensive a circulation as possible to the Holy Scriptures. Notwithstanding the diversity of sentiment which unhappily prevails among christians, we may fairly presume on the concurrence of all parties and denominations in promoting a design so disinterested as that of diffusing the light of revelation. In the prosecution of this design, our party is the world; the only distinction we contemplate, is between the disciples of revelation, and the unhappy victims of superstition and idolatry; and as we propose to circulate the Bible without notes or comments, truth only can be a gainer by the measure. To those who confine their views to this country, the want of Bibles may not appear very urgent; but, without insisting on the many thousands even *here* who are destitute of them; it is certain, that in pagan, mahometan, and popish countries, they are extremely rare, and their number totally inadequate, not merely to supply the immense population in those parts, but even the increasing demand which a variety of circumstances have combined to produce. To supply this demand, to whatever extent it may be carried, is the aim of the society in London with which this is designed to cooperate. Their ambition, as far as it may please God

to smile upon their efforts, is, by imparting the Holy Scriptures, to open the fountain of revelation to all nations. It was natural and necessary for the first movement in so great an enterprise to commence at the heart of the empire; nor is it less so, that, having commenced there, it should propagate itself through the larger vessels and arteries to the remotest extremities of the body. We have the pleasure of perceiving, that the example of the metropolis has already been followed in several of our principal towns and cities; and there is room to hope that similar institutions will, ere long, be formed in every part of the kingdom. Nor has the emulation excited been confined to this nation and its dependencies; societies of the same description have been formed at Philadelphia, at Berlin, and at Basle, each of which derives support and assistance from the original one established in the metropolis of Great Britain. While so general an alacrity has been evinced on this occasion, it had ill become the character of the town of Leicester to stand neuter, highly distinguished as it is for its great and ancient respectability, as well as for the extent of its establishments, and exertions in the cause of religion and charity. We have the pleasure of reflecting, that the meeting, so obligingly called by the mayor, was numerously and respectably attended, that the utmost harmony prevailed in its proceedings, and that there appeared throughout an utter oblivion of party distinctions, with an emulation in each individual to promote to the utmost the purposes for which we were convened.

In whatever light we consider the British and Foreign Bible Society, it appears to us replete with utility. Its formation will, we trust, constitute a new æra in the history of religion, which may be styled the æra of unanimity. It affords a rallying point for the piety of the age, an unsuspicious medium of communication between the good of all parties and nations, a centre of union and cooperation in the advancement of a common cause, which cannot fail to allay the heats, and smooth the asperities of discordant sentiment. By giving the

most effectual aid to means already set on foot for the conversion of pagan nations, it also promises to accelerate the period when truth shall become victorious in the earth. When the pure light of revelation once shines amid the darkness of polytheism, we may venture to hope that the latter will be gradually expelled, that the contrast of truth and error, of sacred mysteries and preposterous fictions, they respectively display, will be deeply and extensively felt. What the Bible Society proposes, let it be remembered, is not to circulate such a number of copies of the New Testament in foreign parts as shall merely suffice to gratify the curiosity of the learned, to adorn a museum, or to enrich a library; but to lay them open, if possible, to all classes of society in every nation. What incalculable benefits may be expected to result from the completion of such a plan! Wherever the Scriptures are generally read, the standard of morals is raised, the public mind is expanded, a spirit of inquiry excited, and the sphere of intellectual vision inconceivably enlarged. While they contribute most essentially to the improvement of reason, by presenting to its contemplation the noblest objects, they aid its weakness, and supply its deficiencies, by information beyond its reach. If "to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent," be, as our Saviour assures us, "eternal life," to adopt effectual measures for imparting that knowledge, must be allowed to be the most genuine exercise of benevolence. It is to be lamented that protestant nations have been too long inattentive to this object: we rejoice to find that they are now convinced of their error; and that, touched with commiseration for the unhappy condition of mankind, they are anxious to impart those riches which may be shared without being diminished, and communicated without being lost to the possessor. Such is the felicity of religion,—such the unbounded liberality of its principles. Though we should be sorry to administer fuel to national vanity, we cannot conceal the satisfaction it gives us to reflect, that, while the fairest portion of the globe has fallen a prey to that guilty and restless ambi-

tion, which, by the inscrutable wisdom of Providence, is permitted, for a time, to take peace from the earth, this favoured country is employed in spreading the triumphs of truth, multiplying the means of instruction, and opening sources of consolation to an afflicted world. In these eventful times, so pregnant with difficulty and danger, we consider this as affording a most favourable omen of the ultimate intentions of Providence respecting this nation.

Having briefly explained our object and motives, we beg leave to recommend the Leicester Auxiliary Bible Society to the patronage of an enlightened public, not doubting they will feel the propriety of lending their support to an institution, which, besides the circulation of the Scriptures abroad, promises to provide for our domestic wants, by enabling the poorest person to possess himself of that invaluable treasure.

A SPEECH

DELIVERED AT

THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY MEETING OF THE LEICESTER AUXILIARY BIBLE SOCIETY.

April 13, 1812.

PERMIT me to say that I heartily concur in the sentiments so forcibly expressed by the respectable speakers who have preceded me. The more I reflect upon the constitution, operation, and genius of the Bible Society, the more is my conviction confirmed of its excellence and utility. It is matter of surprise to me, that an institution so admirable, and so beneficial, should meet with the least opposition from the professors of our common christianity, when the propriety of making the Scriptures as extensively known as possible might be supposed to pass among protestants for an incontrovertible maxim. To imagine such a measure can be carried into effect without being productive of much good, and still more to augur mischievous consequences as the probable result, approaches so near to an impeachment of the perfection and sufficiency of the divine oracles, that, to my poor judgment, it appears difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish them. For my part, I am at an utter loss to conceive of a revelation from heaven *that must not be trusted alone;* of a rule of life and manners which, in the same breath, is declared to be perfect, and yet so obscure and incompetent that its tendency to mislead shall be greater than its tendency to conduct in the right path; of a fountain of truth (and the only original fountain, as our opponents themselves allow) more calculated, when

left to its silent operation, to send forth bitter waters than sweet. If these must appear to a candid and impartial mind untenable and contradictory propositions, then must the chief objections of our opponents fall to the ground, and their prognostics of danger, from the operations of the Bible Society, be pronounced chimerical and unfounded. Whoever weighs the arguments of our opponents must be convinced that they all turn upon the following supposition—that the Scriptures are so ambiguous and obscure that, when left to themselves, they are more likely to generate error than truth, to foment division than to produce unanimity and agreement. If this implies no reflection on the excellence of the Bible, and the wisdom of its Divine Author, what, I will ask, can imply such a reflection? And, if this be not admitted, how is it possible, for a moment, to entertain a scruple respecting the propriety of giving them the most extensive circulation?

To dread the indiscriminate perusal of the Scriptures, and, under pretence of tender consideration for the weakness of the common people, prohibit their circulation, has always been regarded as one of the most detestable features of popery. From the very dawn of the Reformation it has been stigmatized by protestants of every description, as constituting a principal branch of the mystery of iniquity. But wherein does the maxim of our opponents differ from that of the papists on this subject? If any difference can be perceived, it is certainly not in the *nature* but in the *extension* of the principle. The papists contend that the common people are not to be intrusted with the Bible *at all;* while our opponents assert that they are not to be trusted with it *alone.* The former instruct their votaries to shut their ears against the voice of God altogether; the latter insist that it is dangerous to hear it, except in immediate conjunction with their own interpretation. Surely this must be considered as strange language in a protestant country, and most offensive to protestant ears.

What is the reason that the Scriptures may not be trusted alone? 'Why,' say our opponents, 'they are

liable to be misinterpreted, and wrested to countenance the respective opinions and practices of different sects and parties.' Be it so: we admit this to be possible; but what remedy can be devised to obviate this evil? Is their use to be entirely proscribed? 'No,' say our opponents, 'but they must be invariably accompanied by another book, which may be considered in the light of an authorized commentary.' But we would ask, again, are we to judge of this commentary; or are we to receive it simply on the ground of authority, and upon the principle of implicit faith; or is any exercise of private judgement permitted to us? If it be replied that it is not, this is neither more nor less than barefaced popery. If the judgement is to be exerted at all, and every thing is not to be taken upon trust, their commentary must be judged of by some criterion, and what can that be but the Scriptures? The Scriptures must then, after all, be appealed to, before it is possible to determine on the correctness of the commentary; and thus we are led back to the precise point from which we set out, that is, the examination of the Scriptures. According to the views of our opponents, we are either to admit the principle of implicit faith to its utmost extent, which is open and avowed popery; or we are first to interpret the Scriptures by the commentary, and then judge of the commentary by the Scriptures. This is the circle, out of which it is impossible for our opponents to escape, and they may be lashed round it to all eternity! Let it once be admitted that the sacred volume is the only standard of truth, and the only infallible directory in practice, and it will necessarily follow that all other modes of instruction must be tried by it; and consequently, that every idea of giving it a corrective, or a companion, call it which you please, must be futile and absurd. I am persuaded I am speaking the sentiments, on this occasion, of every individual who composes this meeting, and not abetting the views of any particular party. I trust none in the present assembly will do me the injustice of supposing that any reflection is intended upon the liturgy: though a protes-

tant dissenter, I am by no means insensible to its merits. I believe that the evangelical purity of its sentiments, the chastised fervour of its devotion, and the majestic simplicity of its language, have combined to place it in the very first rank of uninspired compositions. The maxim we wish to establish, as amply sufficient to overrule the objections of our opponents, is simply that, which, in the hands of the immortal Chillingworth, was found capable of demolishing the whole fabric of popery. "The Bible," said he, "the Bible alone, is the religion of protestants."

The conduct of those who have distinguished themselves by their opposition to the Bible Society is also inconsistent in another point. While they deprecate the operations of the Bible Society, in circulating the Bible alone in this country, they applaud this very identical measure in its application to foreign parts. This appears to me a very extraordinary conduct. Their proceeding can only be justified on the admission that, notwithstanding the possible perversion of the scripture to ill purposes, it is calculated, when left to itself, to do good on the whole. In this instance, it is conceded that its use more than counterbalances the possible inconvenience arising from its abuse: a clear surplus of good is contemplated as the probable result, for, without such an expectation, how can the measure in question be entitled to commendation for a moment? I would ask, then, what principle of reasoning is that which will justify an opposition to the scheme of action which, it is admitted, is likely on the whole to do good, although it may possibly be accompanied with a portion of evil allowedly inferior. Are not all the calculations of prudence founded on a comparison of advantages and disadvantages? Have not all the plans of benevolence, which have ever been devised, proceeded on a necessary compromise with contingent evils, where, if it can be demonstrated that these bear no proportion to the good likely to result, every requisition is satisfied, and every reasonable suffrage secured? Are we to sit still, and attempt nothing for the improvement of our species, until we are

mathematically certain that nothing can possibly spring from our efforts but pure, unmingled, defecated good; and this in a world abounding with imperfections of all sorts, where evil is so widely diffused as to insinuate itself into every mode of action, and every element of enjoyment? If this is not pretended, why should it be deemed necessary for the operations of the Bible Society to furnish an exception; or that it should be perfectly free from that portion of inconvenience and evil which cleaves to all the works of men? When our enemies object to the distribution of the Scriptures alone in this country, and, at the same time, applaud the same measures with respect to foreign parts, they surely forget that the same objections apply, and with equal force, to the latter, as to the former proceeding. The obscurity of which they complain, which exposes them to the danger of being misinterpreted, their liability to be wrested to countenance error, heresy, and schism, are properties which, I presume, we shall not be very ready to ascribe to them. But, admitting them to possess these qualities, will they lose them by being conveyed to distant countries? Is their tendency to be pronounced pernicious or salutary, according to the degrees of latitude and longitude? Are there not a variety of sects and parties on the Continent, as well as in Great Britain, to whose views the perversion of them may be rendered subservient? Is the information they afford in this country doubtful and obscure; and does it become at once clear and decisive when it is communicated in foreign parts? As our opponents seem to suppose they possess a valetudinarian habit, and require a very delicate management in this country, perhaps they imagine their constitution may be improved by a sea-voyage and change of air!

Let it be carefully remembered, that the topics insisted upon by the objectors to the Bible Society, are precisely those on which the papists have been wont to insist in their controversy with protestants: the obscurity of the Scriptures, the danger of misinterpretation,

and the facility with which they may be wrested to the support of heresy and schism. It is surely little to the credit of our opponents, that they have no other weapons to attack us with, but what have been undeniably forged in the camp of the Philistines. It would, unquestionably, be an ill omen to this country, if pleas, drawn from the supposed insufficiency of scripture, should be again received, and become popular, which have been the principal means in former ages, of involving the world in the darkness of superstition and idolatry. The perversion of the Bible can proceed only from the corruption of its readers :—now, what is the remedy for this corruption, but the Scriptures themselves? Have they, who oppose our proceeding, discovered, in the plenitude of their wisdom, any better corrective of the ill propensities of the heart, the attachment to vice, the conceit of superior understanding, and the love of change, which are the prolific sources of error, than those lively oracles which God himself has declared are able to make us wise unto salvation? "The heavens and the earth," it is true, "declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handywork." This effect, however, they must be understood to produce only in minds rightly disposed; for, in point of fact, they have been the innocent means of enticing millions to idolatry, while they never, as far as we know, reclaimed a single individual from that impiety. Hence the Psalmist, after celebrating these works of the Most High, directs our attention to a superior source of illumination, adding, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." St. Paul congratulates Timothy upon his having known, from a child, the Holy Scriptures, which were able to make him, with faith in Christ, wise unto salvation. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for correction, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work." When I reflect on these passages, and others of the same import, I feel no difficulty in acceding to the

declaration of Lord Francis Osborne, that a child might answer the ablest of our opponents, provided that child were a christian.

It is asserted that we have no reason to expect the conversion of foreign nations, in consequence of the sole perusal of the sacred volume; and, in support of this opinion, our adversaries urge a passage in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans:—"How shall they call on him on whom they have not believed; and how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard; and how shall they hear without a preacher?" This inference appears to me to be founded upon an entire misconstruction of the passage: the apostle means to distinguish between the situation of those who are necessarily unacquainted with the character of the Saviour, and that of the persons to whom this information was conveyed; without intending to determine, or at least to lay any stress on, the precise mode of communication by which they obtained it. This is the more manifest from the extension of meaning in which the term *preach* is used by the same writer:—"For Moses," saith the same St. Paul, "hath in every city them that *preach* him, being *read* in the synagogue every sabbath-day." Such is the want of candour on the part of our adversaries, and such the unworthy artifices by which they pervert the language of scripture from the simplicity and majesty of its meaning.

It might be naturally concluded, from this species of objection to the Bible Society, that our opponents were distinguished by a more than ordinary portion of zeal for the propagation of christianity in foreign parts, by the aid of missionaries: I sincerely wish the result of an attention to facts were such as would justify this inference. The friends of the Bible Society, it is well known, are the warmest supporters of foreign missions; and the holy flame by which they are animated expands in all directions, stimulating them at once to the most active exertions in the distribution of the Scriptures at home, and for the support of the ministry of the gospel in pagan countries. When we compare, with their con-

duct, the coldness and indifference of our adversaries to this object, we are compelled to perceive that the invidious preference they give to one mode of doing good, is not so much to be ascribed to their peculiar attachment to it, as to a desire of depreciating and depressing the importance of another.

Permit me to close these observations (for the length of which I ought already to apologize to the respectable audience I am addressing) with briefly noticing some of the indirect, though important advantages, likely to result from the establishment and progress of the Bible Society. The direct benefit we contemplate, as the fruit of this institution, will undoubtedly be reaped by that innumerable multitude, among all nations, who, by means of it, will be furnished with an opportunity of perusing the sacred volume; but there are other collateral advantages, of the most important kind, which have already been experienced in part, and may be expected to accrue still more hereafter, from the admirable society of which this is an auxiliary branch. Among these, we cannot pass over its tendency to promote a good understanding among christians of different denominations. It pretends not, indeed, to cast any light on the questions which have unhappily divided the christian world; but as far as the objects of it are concerned, it consigns them to oblivion;—it presents a common ground of cooperation, and a centre of union without a sacrifice of principle, or the surrender of the smallest atom of the respective opinions and practices by which we are distinguished. Who, but the Author and Giver of all concord, could have put into the hearts of the children of men a design so beneficial and godlike, so adapted to allay the heats and animosities which have so often disturbed the peace of society, and disfigured our common christianity? It is like the "precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments." It is, indeed, a most sacred perfume; and, while it is so abundantly poured out in the view of all nations, I cannot but imagine I see it ascending in clouds of incense

to heaven, grateful to God, to his saints, and to the holy angels, consecrating this happy soil, and drawing down upon it a copious shower of benedictions and blessings. How much unanimity strengthens, and discord enfeebles, the sinews of empire, is too obvious to need to be insisted on; nor was there ever a period in the history of Great Britain, when the former was more to be desired, or the latter more to be deprecated. The Bible Society is a solemn and public recognition, calculated, beyond any event that has yet transpired, to confound infidelity, and to expel from the nation the last relics of that detestable impiety, to shut up every crevice of the infernal pit, and disperse every atom of the pestilential stream. The sophistry of infidels had been successfully confuted by a succession of able writers; they have retired, baffled, from the field, their arrows spent, their ammunition exhausted; and nothing remained but to signalize the victory by a public monument, and to embody the national sentiment by erecting a public trophy out of the spoils of the enemy. This idea the Bible Society has nobly realized, by taking pledges from the statesmen, the senators, the nobles of the land, of their devoted attachment to the Word of God: they have publicly lifted up their voice, and declared, in the face of all Europe, that the Bible is the religion of Great Britain. What lustre does this shed upon our country: it appears the grand seminary of christian principle. Perhaps there is no single moment, night or day, in which some voice does not rise up to heaven in its behalf; and prayer is the grand key that unlocks the celestial treasury.

It is not too much to hope that the attachment to the gospel, avowed by those who have cooperated in the measures of this society, will be followed by an increased attention on their part to explore its contents, to imbibe its spirit, and to regulate their lives by its precepts; and that thus the interests of vital christianity, may keep pace with the more extensive promulgation of revealed truth. Let our activity in the cause be followed up by an increased spirit of attachment and investigation;

let us earnestly desire to taste that bread of life which it is the property of this society to communicate: then shall we be a happy, because a holy people, and this will throw around us a greater splendour than Roman or Grecian genius could bestow. Should the sentiments of that divine book take possession of the heart, and mould the character of the inhabitants of this country, it would secure to the nation a higher protection than all its military and naval preparations; and even the rocks with which our isle is girt, would, in comparison, be a feeble rampart against the assaults of our enemy. With perfect composure we leave the decision of this great controversy—and a greater never engaged the attention of mankind—to the arbitration of the Supreme Judge, without the smallest apprehension that we shall be called to an account, in that day when the earth and the works thereof shall be burnt up, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, for having unrolled too widely that volume which discloses to the eye of faith the realities and prospects of eternity. Nor will it be deemed presumption, if I affirm that, in a dying hour, when the interests and passions which now agitate us shall shrink to their due dimensions, it will afford us more satisfaction in the retrospect to have been the friends than the enemies of the Bible Society.

A SPEECH,

DELIVERED AT

THE GUILDHALL, LEICESTER,

On Tuesday, July 15, 1817,

AT THE SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AUXILIARY BIBLE SOCIETY.

It has been usual, on these occasions, to eulogise the Bible Society; I will not say beyond its merits, for they are more than equal to the powers of the most exalted panegyric: but the frequency of these encomiums must be my apology for saying but little on that topic at present. The stores of rhetoric appear to me to be exhausted; while every department of nature and of art has been summoned and made to contribute its share to the illustration of the divine simplicity of its principle, the sanctity of its object, and the extent and grandeur of its operations. Never was there an institution, which at once went so far forward in the distribution of its benefits, and exerted such a reflex energy on its members and patrons; producing a generous enthusiasm, which kindles at every step, and is raised to a more intense degree by every fresh achievement.

I consider this society as a new moral power, which, combining the energies of Christendom in one great effort, promises to change the face of the universe; while, in imitation of Him in whose cause it is enlisted, it travels in the greatness of its strength, "mighty to save." It possesses every characteristic of the work of

God, in which the simplest means are made to produce the greatest effects; where there is the utmost economy in the contrivance, and the greatest splendour and magnificence in the design. The imbecility of man appears in the littleness of his ends, which he accomplishes, for the most part, by complicated and laborious operations. Omnipotence, on the contrary, places opulence in the end, and parsimony in the means. While our pride is mortified by perceiving how little we can effect by the greatest efforts, the Almighty touches a secret spring, known only to himself, and impresses a single motion, which propagates itself in circles continually extending, till it reaches the extremity of the universe, and diffuses order and happiness through regions most remote from its origin, and most unconscious of its cause.

Of so similar a character is the Bible Society, and so analogous to the movements of divine power, that, it appears to me, it would be impious not to acknowledge the agency of the Spirit in its first conception, as much as the superintendence of Providence in its support. To fix upon a course of action, which gives scope to every virtuous energy, while it stands perfectly aloof from the spirit of party, which draws towards itself the best propensities of our common nature, and unites the pious of every nation and profession in one harmonious family, is not the work of a mortal; it bespeaks the finger of God. Its direct benefits are too obvious to escape the most careless observation: but the indirect influence it exerts, in harmonizing the spirits, and conciliating the affections of such as had long been alienated from each other, is so remarkable, as to make it doubtful, whether its instruments or its objects,—whether those who share, or those who dispense its munificence, are the greatest gainers.

The utility of this admirable institution, however, has been called in question, its constitution censured, and its operations arraigned. To give the Bible to all classes and descriptions, without note or comment, is represented by some as a dangerous experiment, adapted to perplex and mislead uncultivated minds. Excellent as the Scrip-

tures are allowed to be, some preparation, it is asserted, is necessary, ere they are communicated in their full extent; and that the best use that can be immediately made of them, is to compose and distribute such selections and abridgments as seem best calculated for popular instruction.

That some portions of the sacred volume are of more universal interest than others; that the New Testament, for example, has a more immediate relation to our prospects and to our duties, than the Old, is freely conceded: just as one star differs from another star in glory, though they are all placed in the same firmament, and are the work of the same hand. But to this restrictive system, this jealous policy, which would exclude a part of the word of God from universal inspection and perusal, we feel insuperable objections; nor are we disposed to ascribe to any description of men whatever, that control over divine communications which such a measure implies. We are persuaded that no man possesses a right to curtail the gifts of God, or to deal out with a sparing hand what was intended for universal patrimony. If the manner in which revelation was imparted be such as makes it manifest that it was originally designed for the benefit of all, we are at a loss to conceive how any man can have a right, by his interference, to render it inaccessible.

The question, whether the Bible was designed to be communicated to mankind at large without distinction, or to a particular class, with a discretionary power of communicating it at such times and in such proportions as they might deem fit, can only be determined by itself. If it bear decisive indications of its being intended for private custody, if it be found to affirm, or even to insinuate, that it is not meant for universal circulation, we must submit to hold it at the discretion of its legitimate guardians, and to accept, with becoming gratitude, such portions as they are pleased to bestow. From the word of God there can be no appeal: it must decide its own character, and determine its own pretensions. Thus much we must be allowed to assume; that, if it was

originally given to mankind indiscriminately, no power upon earth is entitled to restrict it; because, on the supposition which we are now making, since every man's original right in it was equal, that right can be cancelled by no authority but that which bestowed it. If it was at first promulgated under the character of a universal standard of faith and practice, we are bound to recognize it in that character; and every attempt to alter it, to convert into private what was originally public property, or to make a monopoly of a universal grant, is an act of extreme presumption and impiety. It is to assume a superiority over revelation itself.

Let us see, then, how the matter stands. Let us ascend to its original, and examine in what shape it was first communicated.

Though we are accustomed to speak of the Bible as *one* book, it is, in truth, a collection of many, composed at different periods and by different writers, as holy men of God were moved by the Holy Ghost.

To speak first of the Old Testament. The Old Testament was distributed by the Jews into three parts: the Pentateuch; the earlier and later Prophets, including some historical compositions; and the Hagiographs, or Holy Writings, consisting chiefly of the Book of Job, the Proverbs, and the Psalms.

With respect to the Pentateuch, it is a matter of notoriety that it was delivered with the utmost publicity, and was neither more nor less than the public and municipal law of the Jewish commonwealth, which every king, on his ascending the throne, was commanded to copy with his own hand, as the perpetual rule of his government; and every head of a family, to teach and inculcate on his children, when he sat in his house, and when he walked by the way. It was first proclaimed from the top of Mount Sinai, with ineffable splendour, in the hearing of the whole nation, prefaced with the remarkable words, "Hear, O Israel." There is surely no pretence for representing it as a deposit committed to a particular class, when an accurate acquaintance with it

was requisite, in order to regulate the private, as well as public life, of every Israelite. Though, in process of time, its interpretation gave birth to a particular profession, whose followers are styled scribes in the New Testament, nothing was further from their thoughts than the assumption of a right to withhold it from public perusal: their employment was, partly, by an accurate transcription, to preserve the purity of the copies, and, partly, to elucidate its obscurities.

If we descend to the Prophets, we shall find them addressing their instructions, and announcing their predictions, in the most public manner, to all descriptions of persons — to princes, to nobles, to the populace, in crowded assemblies, in places of the most public resort. Such was the manner in which Jeremiah prophesied:— "I am full," saith he, "of the fury of the Lord; I am weary with holding in; I will pour it out on the children abroad, and upon the assembly of the young men together." (Jer. vi. 11.) When strong political reasons seemed to dictate a different proceeding, when he was violently importuned by his sovereign to conceal his predictions, lest he should weaken the hands of the people, and encourage their enemies, he remained inflexible, and continued to divulge the suggestions of inspiration with the same publicity as before. Yet, it is the prophetic part of scripture which is the most obscure, and most liable to be perverted to the purposes of popular delusion.

Of the Hagiographs little need be said. As they consist chiefly of maxims of civil prudence, sentiments of devotion, and sublime descriptions of the Deity and his works, it is probable none will contend for their restricted circulation.

Let us take a rapid glance at the New Testament. Here the Gospels will claim our first attention: and, with respect to these, if we are to credit the earliest ecclesiastical writers, they are a mere abstract of the preaching of the respective apostles and evangelists whose names they bear. We are informed that, when they were about to leave certain countries, where they

had been employed for a considerable time in disseminating the gospel, the inhabitants of those districts were anxious to possess a permanent record of the principal facts in which they had been instructed, that, by reading them at their leisure, they might, in the absence of their teachers, impress them on their memory. The Gospels of Mark and Luke are affirmed, by the earliest historians, to have been composed from the preaching of St. Peter and St. Paul, and not to have been published until they had received the entire approbation of those apostles. This part of scripture, then, supplies no pretence or apology for the practice of restricted distribution.

The Epistles come next in order: and these, as is evident from their inscriptions, were addressed to whole assemblies of the faithful; in which, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, Jew and Gentile, were incorporated on terms of religious equality. They were also read publicly, every Lord's-day; in the devotional exercises of which, the recitation of the Scriptures, after the manner of the ancient synagogue, occupied a conspicuous place. We find St. Paul strongly adjuring one of the societies to which he wrote, to take care that his epistle was read to "all the holy brethren."

There is one extraordinary book, of a character totally distinct from the rest, which closes the canon of inspiration. The book to which I refer, you are aware, is the Revelation of St. John;—a composition distinguished, above all others, by a profusion of obscure, figurative diction; delineating, by a sort of hieroglyphics, the principal revolutions destined to befall the christian church, from the earliest times till the consummation of all things. This portion of scripture is a fertile mine of erroneous, extravagant conjecture, and supplies, by its injudicious interpretation, more gratification to a heated imagination, to a taste for the marvellous and incredible, than the whole of the New Testament beside; insomuch, that few have been found capable of preserving a perfect sobriety and composure in the midst of its stupendous scenery, where the curtain rises and falls so often, where

new creations so rapidly succeed each other, accompanied by myriads of the angelic order, and the sound of trumpets, and of voices, and thunderings, and lightnings. Yet it is sufficiently remarkable, that this is the only book, to the perusal of which an express benediction is attached: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy." Its integrity is also guarded and secured by a fearful measure denounced against such as shall presume to alter it in the minutest tittle, by adding to, or taking away from its words. The Holy Spirit, foreseeing what actually ensued, that the peculiar features of this prophecy would excite the prejudices of some, and in others its obscurity induce neglect, judged it necessary thus to employ a special precaution against its falling into contempt or oblivion.

Thus it appears, from a rapid induction of particulars, that the Bible is a common property, over which there is no human control; that, as "all scripture is given by inspiration of God," so it is all "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good word and work."

In addition to what has been said, it is also proper to remark, that translations of the sacred book were early made, for the benefit of the unlearned, in the vernacular language of the countries into which christianity had spread; that various versions in the Latin were published in the West, and the Syriac in the East, either during the lives of the apostles, or in the period immediately succeeding: nor was it ever made a question, during the first centuries, whether the inspired writings should be laid open to universal inspection. The christian fathers were well known to have inculcated their perusal on all sorts of men; nor are the most celebrated of them, St. Austin and St. Chrysostom, ever more eloquent than when engaged in unfolding their excellence, and expatiating on their utility, to persons of every description.

It was not till "the man of sin" had placed himself in the temple of God, and exalted himself "above all that

is called God, and that is worshipped," that a different policy prevailed, and the people were told that they must be content to derive their religious information only through the medium of priests.

Is it possible to conceive a greater insult? If we should resent the attempt to disturb an ancient possession, and to remove the landmarks which bound and ascertain the inheritance of our fathers, what ought we to feel when a scheme is set on foot to deprive us of the record of our salvation, of the charter of our immortality? Who are they who pretend a right to sit in judgement on the contents of revelation,—to determine what is proper to be communicated, and what withheld, as though they were sifting the chaff from the wheat? Is it come to this, that the medicine of life is to be dealt out with a sparing and cautious hand, and mixed with foreign ingredients, like arsenic or hemlock, which are only safe when administered in a diluted form, and in small quantities? What is it which has lifted these pretenders to such an envied superiority over their fellow-creatures, while the whole species, sick and infirm, are consigned to the skill of the same great Physician, and are either in a state of spiritual death, or under one and the same process of cure?

Apprehensive as I am of exhausting your patience, there are yet two considerations to which I would direct your attention, sufficient to demonstrate the importance of not relinquishing that right with which God and nature have invested you.

First, The great mass of mankind have no possible motives to tempt them to pervert the dictates of inspiration. The Bible is safest in the custody of those who have no temptation to abuse it, by forcing upon it a language foreign from its original intention. Such is the precise situation of the great body of the people. Their concern in religion is of the purest and most unsuspicious nature, since the only advantage which it is conceivable they can derive from it, is assistance towards holy living and dying. If it fail to put them in possession of a share in the common salvation, there is no

subordinate end to be answered, no private emolument attainable by its means, to compensate for their loss. If it be ineffectual to enlighten and to save them, there is no other benefit which they can flatter themselves with the hope of deriving from it. You, in this assembly, who sustain no clerical character, possess this advantage, at least, over the ministers of religion, that you have no temptations to make a gain of godliness. Your religion either promotes your eternal welfare, or it is nothing to you. How far this is from being the case with the Romish hierarchy, through all its ranks and gradations, from his holiness to the meanest ecclesiastic, few of you need to be informed. The loftiest pretensions to universal empire, the prostration of Christendom at their feet, a plenary power of absolution, of opening the gates of purgatory and of paradise ;—this gigantic dominion, extending to the living and the dead, founds itself entirely on a perverted interpretation of the Scriptures: and, were they laid open to the people in their true intent and meaning, the whole fabric would melt and disappear like a cloud. When we remember this, we cease to be surprised at the extreme animosity which his holiness has evinced to the free circulation of the Scriptures. Their circulation is the sure presage of his destruction; and the roar of his bull (if I may be allowed a pun on so serious a subject) is but the instinctive cry of a beast which feels itself goaded to madness by the operations of the Bible Society. To commit the custody of the the Bible to men who have so deep and vital an interest in its suppression, would be to commit the lamb to the care of the wolf. No, my countrymen! the situation of his holiness possesses nothing in common with ours; and our feelings accord to our situations. He calls for darkness, (and well he may,) to prevent the detection of his errors; we, for light, to conduct us in the pursuit of truth. He courts the shade, to conceal his enormities; we ask for illumination, to enable us to perform our duties. The book which we are employed in circulating, sufficiently solves the problem:—" He that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his

deeds should be reproved: he that doeth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." When the Romish church found she had deviated too far from the religion of the New Testament, to render a reconciliation practicable, she proceeded to take away the key of knowledge by opposing every possible obstacle to its progress; and, having availed herself of the ignorance of the age, and the apathy of the people, to establish her claim to infallibility, she became a standard to herself. Thus she rendered detection impossible; nor did she ever feel herself safe till the stage was completely darkened, till every chink and crevice was closed, through which a ray could penetrate. Thus was the reign of superstition established: but, were we to attempt a recital of a thousandth part of the fearful impieties she was guilty of, and the bloody tragedies she acted in the dark,—her impostures, oppressions, cruelties, and murders,—we should detain you till midnight, and leave the tale half told. Suffice it to observe, that this mystery of iniquity was founded on a prevailing ignorance of the Scriptures, and was completed by reducing them to a monopoly.

Secondly, the next remark to which I would request your attention is, that heresies have seldom or never taken their rise from the mass of the people. Look at the history, trace the origin, of the principal corruptions of christianity which have prevailed at different periods; and you will uniformly find, that they commenced in the higher classes, among men of leisure and speculation; that they were the product of perverted ingenuity and of unsanctified talent. Adapted to subserve the purposes of avarice and ambition, they were the invention of spiritual wickedness in high places. The commonalty, tenacious of the habits of thinking and acting to which they have been trained, are slow in adopting novelties, and the last to be misled by the illusions of hypothesis, or the false refinements of theory. The progress of opinion is from the higher to the lower orders; and it is as unnatural for it to begin at the bottom, as for water to ascend from the valleys to the hills.

The doctrine of transubstantiation is too much at war with common sense to have originated with the common people, any more than the doctrines of purgatory, auricular confession, the worship of the host, or the infallibility of the pope; all of which were gradually obtruded on the laity by the artifices of a designing priesthood, whose interest and ambition they promoted. Far from running into these absurdities of their own accord, the people, harassed, confounded, and dismayed, were hunted into the toils of men who made merchandize of souls. Let but the great body of the people be enlightened by the word of God, let them comprehend its truths, and imbibe its maxims, and they will form the firmest bulwarks against the encroachments of popery, as well as every other erroneous and delusive system. It is in a virtuous and enlightened population, and especially in a yeomanry and peasantry informed and actuated by the true spirit of religion, we look for the security and preservation of its best interests. It was among them that Christianity commenced its earliest triumphs; among them the reformation begun by Luther found its first and fastest friends: and, as it was in this department of society our holy religion first penetrated, should the time arise for its disappearance in other quarters, it is here that it will find its last and safe retreat.

An ingenious allusion was made, in your Report, to catholic emancipation—a subject on which the public mind is much divided. To agitate the question of the expediency of that measure, on the present occasion, would be highly improper; but I may be permitted to remark, that, however our sentiments may vary on the subject of emancipation, considered in a political light, we are unanimous in desiring to bestow that moral emancipation which is of infinitely greater value, and which will best ensure the wise improvement of the liberty catholics possess, as well as of the power they aspire to. We are most solicitous to emancipate them from that intolerable yoke of superstition and priestcraft, under which reason is crippled and made dwarfish, conscience is oppressed, and religion expires. We are per-

fectly convinced that nothing will so essentially contribute to raise our fellow-subjects in Ireland to their just, intellectual, and moral elevation, as the wide and unimpeded circulation of the sacred Scriptures.

Let us, then, proceed with unabated ardour in this glorious career. Let us endeavour to give as wide an extension as possible to the waters of life. Let them flow freely, in opposition to the narrow and mischievous policy which would confine them in artificial pools and reservoirs, where they become stagnant and putrid. Let us join our prayers with our efforts, that the word of God may have "free course and be glorified," whatever opposing force it may sweep away in its progress: and should his holiness the pope, while he is buffeting with the waves, and attempting to arrest the current, be thrown down, and his triple crown totter and tumble from his head; instead of feeling the smallest concern, let us rejoice and exult in the sure presage it will afford of the speedy arrival of that long-looked-for moment, when, at the decree of the Eternal, at the oath of the archangel, Babylon the Great shall sink like lead in the mighty waters.

FRAGMENT.

SPEECH

DELIVERED AT A MEETING OF THE LEICESTER AUXILIARY BIBLE SOCIETY

[NOT PUBLISHED BEFORE.]

If the Scriptures are in reality what they profess to be, we can be at no loss to perceive the obligation we are under to make them as extensively known as possible. On this subject we must allow them to speak for themselves; they assert their claim to be received as an immediate revelation from God, an inspired guide in the conduct of life, and in the pursuit of immortality, "a light shining in a dark place" to direct us in the paths of salvation. They affirm themselves to be the voice of God addressing his creatures on a subject of the last importance. Whether their claim to this character is valid or not, is a question to be discussed with infidels, not among christians, and is therefore to be put out of view in discussing the merits of this society. It is a christian institution, set on foot by professed christians in a christian land. It is strange that, among men professing christianity, a doubt should arise for a moment on the propriety of circulating as widely as possible the records of our common faith, the charter of the common salvation.

But we are not agreed among ourselves on various articles of belief, on the diverse modes of discipline and of worship. True; nor do we profess such agreement:

but that the Scriptures are the standard to which we must all appeal, that they contain the infallible rule of the faith and practice of christians, we are agreed; and what possible objection, then, can a diversity of opinions on other subjects create to the universal distribution of the oracles of God? Are your peculiar views, we would ask the objector, sanctioned, in your apprehension, by these oracles?—then, instead of acting an hostile part, we are your allies;—for we are circulating the very book on which your views are founded; we are diffusing that light, [and] that only, by which you profess to have been conducted to the conclusions at which you have arrived. What greater advantage could you wish for the propagation of your doctrines, than that mankind should have free and [universal] access to the sources of your own conviction? It must be assumed for granted, that, in consequence of faithfully consulting its dictates, you have been guided aright. Why anticipate, in regard to others, an opposite result? why suppose it will bewilder them in the paths of error and heresy, when your own experience attests it has led you into those of rectitude and truth? Is it agreeable to reason to expect that the same tree shall bring forth good fruit and evil fruit; or that the same fountain will send forth sweet water and bitter?

In the midst of that unhappy diversity of sentiment which divides professing christians, what can be conceived more unexceptionably proper than the circulation of that book, in the belief of whose inspiration we all concur, and may therefore act in perfect concert and harmony, without the smallest sacrifice of principle? If our professions are sincere, we are, in such a course of proceeding, at once promoting our respective views, our discriminating tenets, and exhibiting an edifying example of unanimity and concord, combining in one and the same effort the interests of charity and of truth.

We are aware that destructive errors may be, and have been, deduced from an erroneous interpretation of the Bible; there is nothing so absurd and extravagant, in the defence of which it has not been quoted; but, as

this is far from implying any reflection on that sacred book, so it has uniformly arisen from partial and defective views of its contents, where single passages have been violently torn from their connexion, and made to speak a language most remote from the scope and design of the writer. The proper antidote to this evil is [a] diligent and serious perusal of the whole; which will seldom fail, to all practical purposes, to ascertain that which is ambiguous, to elucidate what is obscure, and explain what is figurative and metaphorical. From a full conviction that a *comprehensive* view of the Scriptures is the most effectual corrective of the mistakes into which we may be betrayed by the cursory perusal of detached portions, it is the invariable plan of this society [to] distribute the whole of the Scriptures: nor can we sufficiently admire the inconsistency of those who, deprecating the danger of this, propose a partial distribution of the sacred volume, when it is obvious that the most alarming deviations from truth have arisen from this very cause, an exclusive attention to particular parts, without adverting to the relations they bear to the whole, and the reciprocal light which one portion of Revelation derives from the other. If "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," we are at a loss to conceive how any part can have an opposite tendency, or how the withholding a portion of the instruction it affords can be productive of more illumination than giving it in all its extent. "The foolishness of God is wiser than man," and the conduct of his providence in putting his revelation into our hands, without the smallest limitation or restriction, affords a presumption, or rather a proof, of its tendency to good, and good only; [while, of the contrary,] it is difficult to conceive the possibility without contradicting the decisions of infinite wisdom. If a part only would have been more beneficial than the whole, only a part would have been given; or if the benefit to be derived from the whole is restricted to some privileged class or order, without extending to mankind at large, we should

undoubtedly have been furnished with some intimation of this, some mark or criterion by which to distinguish those favoured individuals who are allowed access to the whole counsel of God. We certainly are at a loss to discern, in the adversaries of this institution, that transcendent piety, that lofty superiority to worldly passions, or that resplendent exhibition of the christian character, which might induce a suspicion of their being, in some peculiar manner, the confidential depositaries of the divine secrets. Whatever pretensions of this sort they may really possess, we can only lament that extreme modesty and reserve which has so effectually concealed [them] from the public view.

Gentlemen, on casting a survey over the different orders into which society is distributed, I am at an utter loss to fix on any description of persons who are likely to be injured by the most extensive perusal of the word of God. The poor, we may be certain, will sustain no injury from their attention to a book, which, while [it] inculcates, under the most awful sanctions, the practice of honesty, industry, frugality, subordination to lawful authority, contentment, and resignation to the allotments of Providence, elevates them to the hope of "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away;" a book, which at once secures the observance of the duties which attach to an inferior condition, and almost annihilates its evils, by opening their prospects into a state, where all the inequalities of fortune will vanish, and the obscurest and most neglected piety shall be crowned with eternal glory. "The poor man rejoices that he is exalted;" and, while he views himself as the member of Christ, and the heir of a blessed immortality, he can look with undissembled pity on the frivolous distinctions, the fruitless agitations, and the fugitive enjoyments of the most eminent and the most prosperous of those who have their portion in this world. The poor man will sustain no injury, by exchanging the vexations of envy for the quiet of a good conscience, and fruitless repinings for the consolations of religious hope. The less is his portion in this life, the more ardently will he

cherish and embrace the promise of a better, while the hope of that better exerts a reciprocal influence, in prompting him to discharge the duties, and reconciling him to the evils, which are inseparable from the present. The Bible is the treasure of the poor, the solace of the sick, and the support of the dying; and, while other books may amuse and instruct in a leisure hour, it is the peculiar triumph of that book to create light in the midst of darkness, to alleviate the sorrow which admits of no other alleviation, to direct a beam of hope to the heart which no [other] topic of consolation can reach; while guilt, despair, and death, vanish at the touch of its holy inspiration. There is something in the spirit and diction of the Bible which is found peculiarly adapted to arrest the attention of the plainest and most uncultivated minds. The simple structure of its sentences, combined with a lofty spirit of poetry,—its familiar allusions to the scenes of nature and the transactions of common life,—the delightful intermixture of narration with the doctrinal and preceptive parts,—and the profusion of miraculous facts, which convert it into a sort of enchanted ground,—its constant advertence to the Deity, whose perfections it renders almost visible and palpable,—unite in bestowing upon it an interest which attaches to no other performance, and which, after assiduous and repeated perusal, invests it with much of the charm of novelty: like the great orb of day, at which we are wont to gaze with unabated astonishment from infancy to old age. What other book besides the Bible could be heard in public assemblies from year to year, with an attention that never tires, and an interest that never cloys? With few exceptions, let a portion of the sacred volume be recited in a mixed multitude, and though it has been heard a thousand times, a universal stillness ensues, every eye is fixed, and every ear is awake and attentive. Select, if you can, any other composition, and let it be rendered equally familiar to the mind, and see whether it will produce this effect.

The importance of attaching a distinct sanction to the rules of moral conduct is immediately obvious; and

whatever eloquence may be employed in painting the beauty of virtue, and the odious deformity of vice, will have little influence in the moment of temptation, and in the conflicts of passion, upon the most cultivated minds, and on those of an inferior description, none at all. These topics appeal to feelings which are feeble and evanescent, while the passions to which they are opposed are violent and intense. Nothing short of a "Thus saith the Lord," accompanied and enforced with the prospect of eternal happiness or misery, will be sufficient to secure the practice of what is right, when vice and crime are recommended by the allurements of pleasure, or the promise of immediate advantage. But it is the word of God only to which the sanction of his authority is attached, and which incessantly reminds us, that the lessons which it teaches are not merely the dictates of reason, but the voice of God. In human instructions, however excellent, there must of necessity be a separation; the instruction is [in] one place the sanction in another: in the Scriptures, and in the Scriptures alone, they are combined and incorporated. Here, it is not a man addressing his exhortations to a fellow-creature; it is the Father of our spirits, the Judge of the universe, speaking from heaven, and grappling with the conscience of the moral and accountable being which he has formed. Let this persuasion be really and deeply felt, and the word of the Lord is "quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword." There is no room for evasion, no pretext for [inattention], and no possibility of escape, except [by] immediate compliance and submission.

ADDRESS

IN BEHALF OF THE

BAPTIST ACADEMICAL INSTITUTION

AT STEPNEY.

[WRITTEN IN 1811 OR 1812.]

IN calling the attention of the public to a new seminary, intended to be established near London, for the education of candidates for the christian ministry, we are desirous of presenting a short account of the motives by which we are actuated, and the objects we have in view.

We beg leave to premise, that nothing is farther from our intention than to interfere with the respectable seminaries already subsisting, from which the church of Christ has derived essential benefit. We congratulate the public on their institution, rejoice in their prosperity, and feel a cordial concurrence with the views of their generous patrons and supporters. We are persuaded, however, that the ground is not yet so fully occupied as to leave no room for a farther extension of the means of instruction to students in theology; and that, among the churches of the Baptist denomination, at least, a difficulty is frequently experienced in procuring young men possessed of those qualifications which the state of society renders desirable. Having been supplied by the noble munificence of a worthy individual, with a house and premises at Stepney, well fitted for an academy, we are desirous of realizing the liberal intentions of the

donor, by carrying into execution the plan of public utility he has meditated.

At this period, no apology can be necessary for attempting to assist young men, designed for the ministry in the acquisition of such branches of knowledge as may qualify them more completely for the successful discharge of that sacred function: since, whatever prejudices unfavourable to learning may have formerly prevailed in serious minds, they appear to have subsided, and christians in general admit the propriety of enlisting literature in the service of religion. From the recent multiplication of theological seminaries among protestant dissenters, such an inference may be fairly deduced. While we assert the absolute sufficiency of the Scriptures for every saving purpose, it is impossible to deny the usefulness of the knowledge derived from books, in unfolding many of its obscurities, explaining many of its allusions, and producing more fully to the view the inestimable treasure it contains. The primary truths of revelation, it is acknowledged, offer themselves at first view in the sacred volume; but there are latent riches and gems of inestimable value, which can be brought to light only by a deeper and more laborious research. There are numberless exquisite harmonies and retired beauties in the scheme of revelation, which are rarely discovered without the union of great industry with cultivated talent. A collection of writings, composed on various occasions, and at remote intervals of time, including detached portions of history the most ancient, and of poetry awfully sublime, but often obscure,—a book containing continual allusions to manners unknown in this part of the world, and to institutions which have long ceased to exist,—must demand all the aid that ingenuity and learning can bring towards its elucidation.

The light of revelation, it should be remembered, is not opposite to the light of reason; the former presupposes the latter; they are both emanations from the same source; and the discoveries of the Bible, however supernatural, are addressed to the understanding, the

only medium of information whether human or divine. Revealed religion is not a cloud which overshadows reason; it is a superior illumination designed to perfect its exercise, and supply its deficiencies. Since truth is always consistent with itself, it can never suffer from the most enlarged exertion of the intellectual powers, provided those powers be regulated by a spirit of dutiful submission to the oracles of God. The evidences of christianity challenge the most rigid examination; the more accurate and extensive the inquiry, the more convincing will they appear. Unexpected coincidences between inspired history, and the most undisputed remains of antiquity will present themselves, and striking analogies be perceived between the course of providence and the supreme economy of grace. The gradual developement of the plan of revelation, together with the dependence of its several parts on each other, and the perfect consistency of the whole, will employ and reward the deepest investigation. In proof of the assistance religion may derive from learning, rightly directed, we appeal to the writings of an Usher, a Newton, and a Bryant; to the ancient apologists of christianity, who, by means of it, unmasked the deformities of polytheism; to the reformers, whom it taught to remove the sacred volume from the dust and obscurity of cloisters, and exhibit it in the dialects of Europe; and to the victorious impugners of infidelity in modern times. Such are the spoils which sanctified learning has won from superstition and impiety, the common enemies of God and man. Nor must we forget to notice, among the most precious fruits of cultivated reason, *that* consciousness of its own deficiencies, and sense of its own weakness, which prompts it to bow to the authority of revelation, and depose its honours at the cross; since its incapacity to solve the most important questions, and to satisfy the most distressing doubts, will be felt with the truest conviction, and attested with the best grace, by such as have made the largest essay of its powers.

An unconverted ministry we look upon as the greatest calamity that can befall the church; nor would

we be supposed to insinuate, by the preceding observations, that education can ever be a proper substitute for native talent, much less for real piety; what we mean to assert is, that the union of all will much enlarge the capacity of doing good. Without descending to particulars, we must be allowed to remark, for example, that the art of arranging ideas in their proper order, and of investigating the nature of different sorts of evidence as well as an acquaintance with the fundamental rules of composition and rhetoric, are of essential service to a public speaker.

The existing state of society supplies additional reasons for extending the advantages of academical education. If former periods have given birth to more renowned scholars, none ever produced so many men of reading and reflection as the present; never was there a time when books were so multiplied, knowledge so diffused,—and when, consequently, the exercise of cultivated talents in all departments was in such demand. When the general level of mental improvements is so much raised, it becomes necessary for the teachers of religion to possess their full share of these advantages, if they would secure from neglect the exercise of a function, the most important to the interests of mankind. If, in the days of inspiration, there were schools of the prophets, and miraculous infusions of wisdom did not supersede human means of instruction, much less are they to be neglected in the present times, when no such communications are expected. To this we must add, that perverted literature is one of the most powerful weapons in the hands of the enemies of divine truth, who leave no effort untried to recommend their cause by the lustre of superior acquisitions, and to form in the public mind the dangerous association between irreligion and talents, weakness and piety.

In insisting so strongly on the advantages of a regular education, we mean no disrespect to those excellent persons who have exercised the ministry, much to the benefit of the church, without those advantages; many of whom are men of vigorous minds, who have

surmounted great obstacles in the pursuit of knowledge; and others, by their piety and good sense, well fitted for the stations which they occupy. We trust that such ministers will always be highly esteemed in our churches: there are situations, it is probable, which they are better qualified to fill than persons of a higher education. To the improvement of the higher classes, however, it will scarcely be denied, men of the latter character are best suited; and, as their salvation is not in itself less important than that of the lower orders, so their superior weight in society attaches to their character and conduct peculiar consideration. It is also manifest, from the examples of a Brainerd, an Elliot, and a Schwartz, that where piety in a candidate for the ministry is once secured, a course of academical studies is no impediment to the growth and developement of qualities the most conducive to success,—deep humility, eminent spirituality, unshaken perseverance, and patient self-denial.

With respect to the principles we wish to see prevail in our future seminary, it may be sufficient to observe, they are in general the principles of the reformation; and, were we to descend to a more minute specification, we should add, they are the principles which distinguish the body of christians denominated Particular or Calvinistic Baptists. While we feel a cordial esteem for all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; disclaiming all pretensions to that vaunted liberality which masks an indifference to revealed truth, we feel no hesitation in declaring, that nothing would give us more concern than to see the seminary we have in contemplation become the organ of infidel or heretical pravity.

We conceive some advantages may accrue from fixing the proposed seminary in the vicinity of the metropolis. It may be hoped that its pecuniary resources will be benefited by being placed in the centre of commercial opulence; that a residence of a few years near the capital of a great empire may give an expansion to the youthful mind; and that the means which it affords of obtaining the assistance of teachers in various departments of

science, no where else to be found, may improve the taste, and direct the exertions of the students.

We conclude, with recommending our undertaking to the patronage of the public, and to the blessing of God, and with expressing our hope, that, through the influence of the Divine Spirit, in a copious effusion on the future patrons, tutors, and students of this seminary, however small in its beginning, it will become respectable for learning and piety, be a nursery of faithful and able ministers, and a blessing to the church of Christ.

PREFACE

TO

HALL'S HELP TO ZION'S TRAVELLERS.

[Written in 1814.]

An aversion to religious controversy may arise from one of two causes, in their nature the most opposite,—a contempt of religion itself, or a high degree of devotional feeling. They who consider the objects of religion as visionary and uncertain, or who, rejecting revelation, feel their inability to find a place where they may fix their footing, will naturally feel an emotion of contempt for theological contests, similar to that which we should experience towards men who were fighting for possessions in the air.

There are not a few who would engage with the utmost seriousness and ardour in a dispute on the nature and effects of paper currency, who would be ashamed of being suspected of directing their attention for a moment to the most weighty question in theology. Attentive to all the aspects and combinations of the material and of the political world, they are accustomed to regard religion as a sort of Utopia, a land of shadow and of fiction, where, wrapt in pleasing vision, credulity reposes on the lap of imposture. Persons of this sort are so completely overcome by the enchantments or the present state, so entirely devoted to the wisdom which St. James denominates earthly and sensual, that they are incapable of being impressed with a conviction of the possibility of a higher order of objects, or a more elevated and refined condition of being, than that with

which they are conversant; and, though they may possess a subtle and penetrating genius, they are not less disqualified for religious inquiries than an idiot or an infant. "They mind earthly things."

How far the indisposition to religious controversy, which prevails at present, may be justly ascribed to this Sadducean temper, I shall not pretend to determine. It is certain, however, that in some, this indisposition proceeds from a better cause. While the former class of persons think religion not worth disputing about, there are others who conceive it to be a subject too sacred for dispute. They wish to confine it to silent meditation, to sweeten solitude, to inspire devotion, to guide the practice, and purify the heart, and never to appear in public but in the character of the authentic interpreter of the will of heaven. They conceive it degraded when it is brought forward to combat on the arena. We are fully convinced that a disputatious humour is unfavourable to piety, and that controversies in religion have often been unnecessarily multiplied and extended; but how they can be dispensed with altogether we are at a loss to discover, until some other method is discovered of confuting error than sound and solid argument. As we no longer live in times (God be thanked!) when coercion can be employed, or when any individual, or any body of men, is invested with that authority which could silence disputes by an oracular decision, there appears no possibility of maintaining the the interests of truth, without having recourse to temperate and candid controversy. Perhaps the sober use of this weapon may not be without its advantages even at the present season. Prone as we are to extremes, may there not be some reason to apprehend, we have passed from that propensity to magnify every difference subsisting amongst christians to a neglect of just discrimination; to a habit of contemplating the christian system as one in which there is little or nothing that remains to be explored? Let us cultivate the most cordial esteem for all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Let us anxiously guard against that asperity and contempt which

have too often mingled with theological debates; but let us aim, at the same time, to acquire and retain the most accurate conceptions of religious truth. Every improvement in the knowledge of Christ, and the mysteries of his gospel, will abundantly compensate for the labour and attention necessary to its attainment.

However unhappily controversies have too often been conducted, the assistance they have afforded in the discovery of truth is not light or inconsiderable. Not to mention the Reformation, which was principally effected by controversy, how many truths have by this means been set in a clearer view! and, whilst the unhappy passions it has awakened have subsided, the light struck out in the collision has been retained and perpetuated.

As the physical powers are scarcely ever exerted to their utmost extent, but in the ardour of combat, so intellectual acumen has been displayed to the most advantage, and to the most effect, in the contests of argument. The mind of a controversialist, warmed and agitated, is turned to all quarters, and leaves none of its resources unemployed in the invention of arguments, tries every weapon, and explores the hidden recesses of a subject with an intense vigilance, and an ardour which it is next to impossible in a calmer state of mind to command. Disingenuous arts are often resorted to, personalities are mingled, and much irritative matter is introduced; but it is the business of the attentive observer to separate these from the question at issue, and to form an impartial judgement of the whole. In a word, it may be truly affirmed that the evils of controversy are transient, the good it produces is permanent.

These observations I beg leave to submit to the reader, as an apology for the republication of a treatise which is confessedly controversial. Coinciding with the venerable author in the general aim and drift of the following sheets, I am far from pledging myself to the approbation and support of every position contained in them; nor would I be understood to attach all the importance to some of the points of discussion, which they appear, in his estimation, to have possessed.

If there be any impression, in the following treatise which implies that the questions at issue betwixt the calvinists and arminians are of the nature of *fundamentals*, (of which, however, I am not aware,) I beg leave, as far as they are concerned, to express my explicit dissent; being fully satisfied that upon either system the foundations of human hope remain unshaken, and that there is nothing, in the contrariety of views entertained on these subjects, which ought to obstruct the most cordial affection and harmony among christians.

Having no pecuniary interest in this work, I may, perhaps, be allowed with more freedom to communicate my opinion of its merit. I am much mistaken if the candid reader will not perceive in the author an impartial love of truth, together with a degree of ingenuity and acuteness in its illustration and defence, not always to be met with in theological discussions.

The sentiments of my honoured father were decidedly calvinistic. His object, however, in the following treatise, was not so much to recommend that system in general, as to disengage it from certain excrescences, which he considered as weakening its evidence and impairing its beauty. On reviewing his religious tenets during the latter years of his life, and impartially comparing them with the Scriptures, he was led to discard some opinions which he had formerly embraced, and which he afterwards came to consider as having a pernicious tendency.

From the moral impotence which the oracles of truth ascribe to man, in his fallen state, a certain class of divines were induced to divide moral and religious duties into two classes, natural and spiritual; comprehending under the latter those which require spiritual or supernatural assistance to their performance, and under the former those which demand no such assistance. Agreeable to this distinction, they conceived it to be the duty of all men to abstain from the outward acts of sin, to read the Scriptures, to frequent the worship of God, and to attend with serious assiduity to the means of grace; but they supposed that repentance, faith in Christ, and

the exercise of genuine internal devotion, were obligatory only to the regenerate. Hence their ministry consisted almost entirely of an exhibition of the peculiar mysteries of the gospel, with few or no addresses to the unconverted. They conceived themselves not warranted to urge them to repent and believe the gospel,—those being the spiritual duties, from whose obligation they were released by the inability contracted by the fall.

These conclusions were evidently founded upon two assumptions: first, that the impotence which the Scriptures ascribe to the unregenerate is free from blame, so as to excuse them from all the duties to which it extends. In opposition to this, the author of the following treatise has proved, in a very satisfactory manner, that the inability under which the unconverted labour is altogether of a moral nature, consisting in the corruption of the will, or an aversion to things of a spiritual and divine nature that is in itself criminal; and that, so far from affording an excuse for what would otherwise be a duty, it stamps with its own character all its issues and productions.

In considering the moral character of an action, we are naturally led to inquire into its motives; and according as that is criminal, laudable, or indifferent, to characterize the action whence it proceeds. The motive, however, appears no otherwise entitled to commendation, than as it indicates the disposition of the agent; so that, in analyzing the elements of moral character, we can ascend no higher than to the consideration of the disposition, or the state of the will and of the affections, as constituting the essence of that portion of virtue or of vice which we respectively ascribe to it. To proceed farther will only involve us in a circle; since to whatever we might trace the disposition in question, should we be induced, for example, to ascribe it to the free exercise of the will, that exercise would fall under the same predicament, and be considered either as virtuous or vicious, according to the disposition whence it proceeds. When the Scriptures have placed the inability of mankind to yield holy and acceptable obedience, in

an evil disposition, or in blindness or hardness of heart, they have conducted us to the ultimate point on this subject, and have established the doctrine of human criminality upon a basis which cannot be shaken or disturbed, without confounding the first principles of moral discrimination. Though this is manifest, this impotence is entirely of a moral nature, totally distinct from the want of natural faculties. It is equally evident, that, to whatever extent it exists, while it actually subsists, it is as effectual an impediment to the performance of holy actions as any physical privation whatever: and on that account, and on that alone, may, without absurdity, be styled an *inability*. This important distinction was not wholly unknown to our earlier divines, though they neglected to avail themselves of it as fully as they ought; it is clearly stated by the great Mr. Howe, in his Blessedness of the Righteous, as well as adverted to by Mr. Baxter in several of his practical works. But the earliest regular treatise on this subject it has been my lot to meet with, was the production of Mr. Truman, an eminent nonconformist divine. In his Dissertation on Moral Impotence, as he styles it, he has anticipated the most important arguments of succeeding writers, and has evinced throughout a most masterly acquaintance with his subject. This work is mentioned in terms of high respect by Nelson, in his Life of Bishop Bull, who remarks that his thoughts were original, and that he had hit upon a method of defending calvinism, against the objections of Bull and others, peculiar to himself. His claim to perfect originality, however, was not so well founded as Nelson supposed. Since his time, the subject has been fully discussed by the celebrated Jonathan Edwards, in his Treatise on the Will, and the distinction defended, with all the depth and precision peculiar to that amazing genius.

Another principle, assumed as a basis by the high calvinists, is, that the same things cannot be the duty of man and the gift of God; or, in other words, that what is matter of promise, can, on no occasion, be the matter of obligation. The Scriptures frequently affirm faith

and repentance to be the gift of God; hence it is concluded that they cannot be obligatory on the unregenerate,—a conclusion diametrically opposed to innumerable passages in the Old and New Testament, which insist, in the most peremptory style, on true conversion and a lively faith as the most essential duties, which other passages are equally express in exhibiting as matter of promise. "A new heart will I give them," says the Lord, by Ezekiel, "and a new spirit will I put within them, and I will take away the heart of stone, and give them a heart of flesh." The same prophet cries, "Make yourselves a new heart; for why will ye die, ye house of Israel?"—in exact accordance with the language of St. James, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." The burthen of our Saviour's ministry, as well as that of his forerunner, was, "Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand;" while St. Peter, who perfectly knew the genius of christianity, affirms that Christ is "exalted to give repentance and the remission of sins." "Circumcise your hearts," said Moses, "and be no longer stiffnecked." The same Moses had been previously commissioned to declare, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart. and the heart of thy seed." Now the circumcision of the heart, we are taught by St. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, to regard as the distinguishing feature of the truly regenerate—of him "who is a Jew inwardly, whose praise is not of man, but of God." Whoever impartially weighs the import of these scriptures, must be convinced that the same things are, in fact, matter of command and the subject of promise, and must consequently be prepared to acquiesce in the decision of Infinite Wisdom on this subject, however much he may be at a loss to explain or account for it. The consistency of the promises, and of the commands in question, arises from the matter of each being of a moral nature. If we will allow ourselves to reflect, we shall perceive that the will, and the will only, is the proper object of command; and that an agent is no otherwise accountable, or susceptible of moral government, than as he is the subject of volun-

tary powers: we shall also perceive, that the disordered state of the will, or the radical indisposition of an agent to comply with legitimate commands, which is the same thing, by no means exempts him from their obligation, nor tends, in the least degree, to render the addressing such commands to him absurd or improper. That they will not be complied with, while that disordered state subsists, is true: but legitimate commands, enforced by proper sanctions, are amongst the strongest motives; that is, they tend, in their own nature, to incline the will, and therefore they cannot be withheld without virtually relinquishing the claim of authority and dominion. This may suffice to evince the propriety of issuing commands, notwithstanding the known and radical indisposition to comply; or, which comes to the same thing whatever be the *state of the will.*

With respect to the other side of the supposed contradiction, what can be plainer than that the will, as well as every other faculty of the mind, is under divine control, and that God can, with infinite ease, in what instances and in what manner he please, so change and modify it, as to induce a prompt and cheerful compliance with his requisition? What should prevent him, at whose disposal are the hearts of the mightiest of men, "to make his people willing in the day of his power?"

It is instructive, as well as amusing, to trace the coincidence which is often found betwixt systems which appear, at first view, at the utmost variance from each other. The grosser arminians and pelagians contend, that it is the duty of all men to repent and believe, because all possess an inherent power of so doing, without special and divine assistance. The high calvinists, on the contrary, deny that men, in a state of unregeneracy, are under an obligation to perform those duties, because they are not possessed of the requisite ability. Thus, both concur in making moral ability the measure of obligation; a position which, when the terms are accurately defined and cleared of their ambiguity, conducts us to this very extraordinary conclusion, that men are obliged to just as much of duty as they are inclined to.

On these and other points connected with them, the reader, if we are not mistaken, will find much solid instruction in the following treatise, accompanied with such a constant attention to the great end of theological discussion—the promotion of practical piety, as can scarcely fail of affording high satisfaction to serious minds. To this treatise, and to another on a similar subject, by my excellent and judicious friend, Mr. Fuller, the dissenters in general, and the baptists in particular, are under great obligation, for emancipating them from the fetters of prejudice, and giving free scope to the publication of the gospel. By these means a considerable revolution has been effected in the sentiments of the denomination to which I have the honour to belong: the excrescences of calvinism have been cut off;—the points of defence have been diminished in number, and better fortified;—truth has shone forth with brighter lustre;—and the ministry of the gospel has been rendered more simple, more practical, and more efficacious.

In reply to such as may object to the metaphysical subtlety which pervades some parts of the following treatise, I would avail myself of the distinction admirably illustrated by the author of the Light of Nature Pursued.* He observes, that although metaphysical reason rarely, if ever, conduces to the discovery of truth, it is of great advantage in the detection of sophistry; and that the mist and confusion in which moral subjects have been involved, by crude and undigested metaphysics, can only be exploded by the temperate use of that which is true and genuine: so that the chief praise of metaphysics is the cure of its own ills, the repair of the mischief which itself has wrought. The reader will observe that the author employs metaphysics, not to rear the fabric of truth, which can only be effected by a profound deference to inspiration, but to demolish a rotten superstructure which conceals its beauty. For the want of elegance or polish, discernible in the following sheets, it will be sufficient apology to inform the reader, that the

* Abraham Tucker.

author, destitute of the advantages of early education, had no other resources to depend upon, in his religious inquiries, than what were derived from the vigour of his understanding, and his unbiassed integrity of heart. Had he enjoyed the benefit of literary culture, he would have undoubtedly written in a style and manner more adapted to gain the attention of the superior classes: whether his reasoning would have been more cogent, or his method of handling his subject better fitted for the instruction of plain serious christians, for whose benefit he principally laboured, is more questionable.

Gratitude and veneration compel me to add, that with all the imperfections of the work, and the disadvantages under which the author of it laboured, I shall ever esteem it one of the greatest favours an indulgent Providence has bestowed upon me, to have possessed such a father, whom, in all the essential features of character, it will be my humble ambition to imitate, though conscious it must ever be

——"Haud passibus æquis."

ROBERT HALL.

PREFACE TO JANEWAY'S LIFE.

[Written in 1816.]

At the request of a highly-esteemed friend, I feel no hesitation in recommending the remarkable narrative, now republished, to the serious attention of the reader. It exhibits a life eminently formed on the example of Christ, and a death-bed scene of extraordinary elevation and triumph. It is next to impossible to contemplate either, as they are exhibited in the following memorial, without feeling an increasing conviction of the reality and dignity of true religion. I am aware that some will object to the strain of devout ecstasy which characterizes the sentiments and language of Mr. Janeway in his dying moments; but I am persuaded they will meet with nothing, however ecstatic and elevated, but what corresponds to the dictates of scripture and the analogy of the faith. He who recollects that the Scriptures speak of a "peace which passeth all understanding, and a joy unspeakable and full of glory," will not be offended at the lively expressions of these contained in this narrative: he will be more disposed to lament the low state of his own religious feeling than to suspect the propriety of sentiments the most rational and scriptural, merely because they rise to a pitch that he has never reached. The sacred oracles afford no countenance to the supposition that devotional feelings are to be condemned as visionary and enthusiastic, merely on account of their intenseness and elevation: provided they be of a right kind, and spring from legitimate sources, they never teach us to suspect they can be carried too far. David

"danced before the Lord with all his might;" and when he was reproached for degrading himself in the eyes of the people by indulging these transports, he replied, If this be to be vile, "I will yet make myself more vile." That the objects which interest the heart in religion are infinitely more durable and important than all others, will not be disputed: and why should it be deemed irrational to be affected by them in a degree somewhat suitable to their value, especially in the near prospect of their full and perfect possession? Why should it be deemed strange or irrational for a dying saint, who has spent his life in the pursuit of immortal good, to feel an unspeakable ecstasy at finding he has just touched the goal, finished his course, and in a few moments is to be crowned with life everlasting? While he dwells on the inconceivably glorious prospect before him, and feels himself lost in wonder and gratitude, and almost oppressed with a sense of his unutterable obligations to the love of his Creator and Redeemer, nothing can be more natural and proper than his sentiments and conduct. While the Scriptures retain their rank as the only rule of faith and practice,—while there are those who feel the power of true religion,—such death-bed scenes as Mr. Janeway's will be contemplated with veneration and delight. It affords no inconsiderable confirmation of the truth of christianity, that the most celebrated sages of pagan antiquity, whose last moments have been exhibited with inimitable propriety and beauty, present nothing equal nor similar; nothing of that singular combination of humility and elevation, that self-renouncing greatness, in which the creature appears annihilated and God all in all. I am much mistaken if the serious reader will not find, in the closing scenes of Mr. Janeway's life, the most perfect form of christianity: he will find it not, as it is too often, clouded with doubts and oppressed with sorrows; he will behold it ascend the mount, transfigured, glorified, and encircled with the beams of celestial majesty.

Let me be permitted, however, to observe that the experience of Mr. Janeway, in his last moments, while

it developes the native tendency of christianity, is not to be considered as a standard to ordinary christians. He affords a great example of what is attainable in religion, and not of what is indispensably necessary to salvation. Thousands die in the Lord, who are not indulged with the privilege of dying in triumph. His extraordinary diligence in the whole of his christian career, his tenderness of conscience, his constant vigilance, his vehement hunger and thirst after righteousness, met with a signal reward, intended, probably, not more for his own personal advantage, than as a persuasive to others to walk in his steps. As he was incessantly solicitous to improve his graces, purify his principles, and "to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord," no wonder he was favoured with an abundant entrance into "the joy of his Lord." "He which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

ROBERT HALL.

RECOMMENDATORY PREFACE

TO A

VOLUME OF HYMNS,

Composed by the late Rev. B. Beddome, M. A.

[WRITTEN IN 1819.]

FAR be it from me to indulge the presumptuous idea of adding to the merited reputation of Mr. Beddome, by my feeble suffrage. But having had the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with that eminent man, and cherishing a high esteem for his memory, I am induced to comply the more cheerfully with the wishes of the editor, by prefixing a few words to the present publication. Mr. Beddome was on many accounts an extraordinary person. His mind was cast in an original mould; his conceptions on every subject were eminently his own; and where the stamina of his thoughts were the same as other men's, (as must often be the case with the most original thinkers,) a peculiarity marked the mode of their exhibition. Favoured with the advantages of a learned education, he continued to the last to cultivate an acquaintance with the best writers of antiquity, to which he was much indebted for the chaste, terse, and nervous diction, which distinguished his compositions both in prose and verse. Though he spent the principal part of a long life in a village retirement, he was eminent for his colloquial powers, in which he displayed

the urbanity of the gentleman and the erudition of the scholar, combined with a more copious vein of attic salt than any person it has been my lot to know. As a preacher he was universally admired for the piety and unction of his sentiments, the felicity of his arrangement, and the purity, force, and simplicity of his language, all of which were recommended by a delivery perfectly natural and graceful. His printed discourses, taken from the manuscripts which he left behind him at his decease, are fair specimens of his usual performances in the pulpit. They are eminent for the qualities already mentioned; and their merits, which the modesty of the author concealed from himself, have been justly appreciated by the religious public. As a religious poet, his excellence has long been known and acknowledged in dissenting congregations, in consequence of several admirable compositions inserted in some popular compilations. The variety of the subjects treated of, the poetical beauty and elevation of some, the simple pathos of others, and the piety and justness of thought which pervade all the compositions in the succeeding volume, will, we trust, be deemed a valuable accession to the treasures of sacred poetry, equally adapted to the closet and to the sanctuary.—The man of taste will be gratified with the beautiful and original turns of thought which many of them exhibit; while the experimental christian will often perceive the most secret movements of his soul strikingly delineated, and sentiments portrayed which will find their echo in every heart. Considerable pains have been taken to arrange the hymns in such a manner as is best adapted to selection, from a persuasion, which we trust the event will justify, that they will be found the most proper supplement to Dr. Watts that has yet appeared.

R. HALL.

A PREFACE

TO

ANTINOMIANISM UNMASKED,

BY THE REV. SAMUEL CHASE.

[Written in 1819.]

It is with considerable reluctance that I have com plied with the request of the highly esteemed author of the following work, by prefixing a short preface; not from the slightest hesitation respecting the excellence of the work itself, but from an aversion to the seeming arrogance of pretending to recommend what might rest so securely on its own merits. The reader, if I am not greatly mistaken, will find in this treatise a train of close and cogent reasoning from the oracles of God, sufficient to overturn from its foundation the principles which compose the antinomian heresy; which he will be at no loss to perceive, are as much opposed to the *grace*, as to the authority, of the great Head of the church.

The fundamental tenet of the system to which this treatise is opposed, consists in the denial of the *obligation* of believers to obey the precepts of Christ, in supposing that their interest in the merits of the Redeemer releases them from all subjection to his authority; and, as it is acknowledged on all hands that he is the sole Lord of the christian dispensation, the immediate consequence is, that, as far as *they* are concerned, the moral government

of the Deity is annihilated—that they have ceased to be accountable creatures. But this involves the total subversion of religion: for what idea can we form of a religion in which all the obligations of piety and morality are done away; in which nothing is binding or imperative on the conscience? We may conceive of a religious code under all the possible gradations of laxness or severity---of its demanding more or less, or of its enforcing its injunctions by penalties more or less formidable;—but, to form a conception of a system deserving the name of religion, which prescribes no duties whatever, and is enforced by no sanctions, seems an impossibility. On this account it appears to me improper to speak of antinomianism as a *religious* error; religion, whether true or false, has nothing to do with it: it is rather to be considered as an attempt to substitute a system of subtle and specious impiety in the room of christianity. In their own estimation, its disciples are a privileged class, who dwell in a secluded region of unshaken security and lawless liberty, while the rest of the christian world are the vassals of legal bondage, toiling in darkness and in chains. Hence, whatever diversity of character they may display in other respects, a haughty and bitter disdain of every other class of professors is a universal feature. Contempt or hatred of the most devout and enlightened christians, out of their own pale, seems one of the most essential elements of their being; nor were the ancient Pharisees ever more notorious for "trusting in themselves that they were righteous, and despising others."

Of the force of legitimate argument they seem to have little or no perception, having contracted an inveterate and pernicious habit of shutting their eyes against the plainest and most pointed declarations of the word of God. The only attempt they make to support their miserable system, is to adduce a number of detached and insulated passages of scripture, forcibly torn from their context, and interpreted with more regard to their sound than to their meaning, as ascertained by the laws of sober criticism. Could they be prevailed upon to en-

gage in serious dispassionate controversy, some hope might be indulged of reclaiming them; their errors would admit of an easy confutation: but the misfortune is, they seem to feel themselves as much released from the restraints of reason, as of moral obligation; and the intoxication of spiritual pride has incomparably more influence in forming their persuasions, than the light of evidence.

As far as they are concerned, my expectation of benefit from the following treatise is far from being sanguine. To others, however, who may be in danger of falling a prey to their seduction, it may prove an important preservative; to the young and inexperienced, it will hold out a faithful warning, by unmasking the deformity and revealing the danger of that pretended doctrine of grace which is employed to annul the obligation of obedience. They will learn from this treatise, that the authority of Christ, as Legislator, is perfectly compatible with his office as the Redeemer of his people; that the renewal of the soul in true holiness forms a principal part of the salvation he came to bestow; that the privileges of the evangelical dispensation are inseparably combined with its duties; and that every hope of eternal life is necessarily presumptuous and unfounded, which is not connected with "keeping the commandments of God." They will perceive the beautiful analogy subsisting between the mosaic and christian dispensation; and that the redemption wrought out upon the cross is just as subservient to the spiritual dominion of Christ over his people, as was the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt to the erection of the theocracy in the Holy Land: in a word, they will plainly see that the regal authority of Christ over his church belongs to the very essence of the evangelical economy, considered as an annunciation of the *kingdom* or *reign* of God.

To trace the process of antinomianism, and investigate the steps by which it has gradually attained its fearful ascendency, though an interesting inquiry, would lead me far beyond the limits of this preface. Suffice it to suggest a few circumstances which appear to me to

have contributed not a little to that result. When religious parties have been long formed, a certain technical phraseology, invented in order to designate, more exactly, the peculiarities of the respective systems, naturally grows up. What custom has sanctioned, in process of time becomes law; and the slightest deviation from the consecrated diction comes to be viewed with suspicion and alarm. Now the technical language appropriated to the expression of the calvinistic system in its nicer shades, however justifiable in itself, has, by its perpetual recurrence, narrowed the vocabulary of religion, and rendered obsolete many modes of expression which the sacred writers indulge without scruple. The latitude with which they express themselves on various subjects has been gradually relinquished; a scrupulous and systematic cast of diction has succeeded to the manly freedom and noble negligence they were accustomed to display; and many expressions, employed without hesitation in scripture, are rarely found, except in the direct form of quotation, in the mouth of a modern calvinist.

In addition to this, nothing is more usual than for the zealous abettors of a system, with the best intentions, to magnify the importance of its peculiar tenets by hyperbolical exaggerations, calculated to identify them with the fundamental articles of faith. Thus, the calvinistic doctrines have often been denominated, by divines of deservedly high reputation, *the doctrines of grace;* implying, not merely their truth, but that they constitute the very essence and marrow of the gospel. Hence persons of little reflection have been tempted to conclude that the zealous inculcation of these comprehends nearly the whole system of revealed truth, or as much of it, at least, as is of vital importance; and that no danger whatever can result from giving them the greatest possible prominence. But the transition from a partial exhibition of truth to the adoption of positive error is a most natural one: and he who commences with consigning certain important doctrines to oblivion, will generally end in perverting or denying them. The authority of the laws of Christ, his proper dominion over his people, and the

absolute necessity of evangelical obedience in order to eternal life, though perfectly consistent, in my apprehension, with calvinism, form no part of it, considered as a separate system. In the systematic mode of instruction they are consequently omitted, or so slightly and sparingly adverted to, that they are gradually lost sight of; and when they are presented to the attention, being supported by no habitual mental associations, they wear the features of a strange and exotic character. They are repelled with disgust and suspicion, not because they are perceived to be at variance with the dictates of inspiration, (their agreement with which may be immediately obvious,) but, simply, because they deviate from the trains of thought which the hearer is accustomed to pursue with complacency. It is purely an affair of taste; it is neither the opposition of reason, nor of conscience, which is concerned, but the mere operation of antipathy.

The paucity of practical instruction,—the practice of dwelling almost exclusively, in the exercise of the ministry, on doctrinal and experimental topics, with a sparing inculcation of the precepts of Christ and the duties of morality,—is abundantly sufficient, without the slightest admixture of error, to produce the effect of which we are speaking: nor is it to be doubted that even holy and exemplary men have by these means paved the way for antinomianism. When they have found it necessary to advert to points of morality, and to urge them on scriptural motives, the difference between these and their usual strain of instruction has produced a sort of mental revulsion. Conscious, meanwhile, that they have taught nothing but the pure and uncorrupted word of God,—have inculcated no doctrine but what appears to be sustained by the fair interpretation of the word,—they are astonished at perceiving the eager impetuosity with which a part of their hearers run into antinomian excesses: when a thorough investigation might convince them, that, though they have inculcated truth, it has not been altogether "as it is in Jesus;" that many awakening and alarming considerations familiar to the Scriptures have been neglected, much of their pungent and practical ap-

peal to the conscience suppressed, and a profusion of cordials and stimulants administered, where cathartics were required.

In the New Testament, the absolute subserviency of doctrinal statements to the formation of the principles and habits of practical piety, is never lost sight of; we are continually reminded that obedience is the end of all knowledge, and of all religious impressions. But the tendency, it is to be feared, of much popular and orthodox instruction, is to bestow on the belief of certain doctrines, combined with strong religious emotion, the importance of an ultimate object, to the neglect of that great principle that "circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." While it is but candid to suppose that some are beguiled through the "good words and fair speeches" by which the apostles of antinomianism recommend themselves to the unlearned and unstable, it can scarcely be doubted that they are chiefly indebted for their success to the aversion which many feel to christianity as a *practical* system. Divest it of its precepts and its sanctions,—represent it as a mere charter of privileges,—a provision for investing a certain class with a title to eternal life, independent of every moral distinction, and it will be eagerly embraced: but it will not be the religion of the New Testament; it will not be the religion of him who closed his Sermon on the Mount by reminding his hearers that he who "heareth his sayings, and doeth them not, shall be likened to a man who built his house upon the sand, and the storm came, and the rains descended, and the winds blew, and beat on that house, and it fell, because it was founded upon the sand."

The most effectual antidote to the leaven of antinomianism will probably be found in the frequent and earnest inculcation of the practical precepts of the gospel; in an accurate delineation of the christian temper; in a specific and minute exposition of the personal, social, and relative duties, enforced at one time by the endearing, at another by the alarming, motives, which revelation abun-

dantly suggests. To overlook the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, under the pretence of advancing the interests of morality, is one extreme ; to inculcate those doctrines, without habitually adverting to their purifying and transforming influence, is another, not less dangerous. If the former involves the folly of attempting to rear a structure without a foundation, the latter leaves it naked and useless.

A large infusion of practical instruction may be expected to operate as an alterative in the moral constitution. Without displacing a single article from the established creed,—without modifying or changing the minutest particle of speculative belief,—it will generate a habit of contemplating religion in its true character, as a system of moral government, as a wise and gracious provision for re-establishing the dominion of God in the heart of an apostate creature. Though there must unquestionably be a perfect agreement betwixt all revealed truths, because truth is ever consistent with itself, yet they are not all adapted to produce the same immediate impression. They contribute to the same ultimate object, "the perfecting the man of God," by opposite tendencies ; and, while some are immediately adapted to inspire confidence and joy, others are fitted to produce vigilance and fear ; like different species of diet, which may, in their turn, be equally conducive to health, though their action on the system be dissimilar. Hence it is of great importance, not merely that the doctrine that is taught be sound and scriptural, but that the proportion maintained amidst the various articles of religious instruction coincide, as far as possible, with the inspired model ; that each doctrine occupy its proper place in the scale ; that the whole counsel of God be unfolded, and no one part of revealed truth be presented with a frequency and prominence which shall cast the others into shade. The progress of antinomianism, if I am not greatly mistaken, may be ascribed, in a great measure, to the neglect of these precautions,—to an intemperate, and almost exclusive, inculcation of doctrinal points.

Even when the necessity of an exemplary conduct is

enforced upon christians, an attentive and intelligent hearer will frequently perceive a manifest difference between the motives by which it is urged, and those which are presented by the inspired writers. The latter are not afraid of reminding every description of professors, without exception, that "if they live after the flesh they shall die;" and that they will then only "be partakers of Christ if they hold fast the beginning of their confidence, and rejoicing of their hope, firm unto the end:" while too many content themselves with insisting on considerations, which, whatever weight they may possess on a devout and tender spirit, it is the first effect of sinful indulgence to impair. Of this nature is the menace of spiritual desertion, darkness, absence of religious consolation, and other spiritual evils, which will always be found to be less alarming, just in proportion to the degree of religious declension. To combat the moral distempers to which the professors of religion are liable, by such antidotes as these, is appealing to a certain refinement of feeling, which the disease has extinguished or diminished, instead of alarming them with the prospect of death. It was not by sentimental addresses, nor by an appeal to the delicacies and sensibilities of a soul diseased, that the apostles proposed to alarm the fears, or revive the vigilance, of disorderly walkers: they drew aside the veil of eternity; they presented the thought, in all its terrors, of the coming of Christ, "as a thief in the night." I would not be understood to insinuate, that the more refined topics of appeal may not occasionally be resorted to with great propriety; all I would be supposed to regret is, the exclusive employment of a class of considerations, of one order of motives, derived from religious sensibility to the neglect of those which are founded on eternal prospects and interests. As it is seldom safe for an accountable creature to lose sight of these in his most elevated moments; so least of all can they be dispensed with in the season of successful temptation. It is then especially, if I am not greatly mistaken, whatever may have been our past profession or attainments, that we need to,

be reminded of the awful certainty of future retribution to recall to our remembrance that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." If, in the scheme of doctrine we have embraced, we suspect there is something incompatible with the use of such admonitions, we may be assured, either that the doctrine itself is false, or that our inference from it is erroneous, since no speculative tenets in religion can be so indubitably certain, as the universality of the moral government of God.

Before I close this preface, I must be permitted to add, that the prevailing practice of representing the promises of the gospel as *unconditional*, or, at least, of carefully avoiding the obvious phraseology which the contrary supposition would suggest, appears to me directly to pave the way to antinomianism. The idea of *meritorious* conditions is, indeed, utterly incompatible with the gospel, considered as a system of grace. But if there be no conditions of salvation whatever, how it is possible to confute the pretensions, or confound the confidence, of the most licentious professor, I am at an utter loss to discover. It will be in vain to allege the entire absence of internal holiness, together with all the fruits of the Spirit as defeating his hope of eternal life; since upon the supposition we are combating, the answer is ready, that the enjoyment of future felicity is suspended on no conditions. The absurdity of this notion is not less palpable than its presumption. All promises must either be made to individuals by name, or, indefinitely to persons of a specific character. A moment's attention will be sufficient to satisfy us that the promise of pardon in the New Testament is of the latter description; in no one instance is it addressed to the individual by name, but to the penitent, the believing, the obedient, or to some similar specification of character. Before any person, therefore, can justly appropriate the promise to himself he must ascertain his possession of that character; or, which is precisely the same thing, he must perceive that he comes within the prescribed condition. When it is affirmed that "except we repent we

shall perish," is it not manifest that he only is entitled to claim exemption from that doom who is conscious of the feelings of a penitent? For the same reason, if he only who believes shall be saved, our assurance of salvation, as far as it depends upon evidence, must be exactly proportioned to the certainty we feel of our actual believing. To abandon these principles is to involve ourselves in an inextricable labyrinth, to lie open to the grossest delusions, to build conclusions of infinite moment on phantoms light as air. He who flatters himself with the hope of salvation, without perceiving in himself a specific difference of character from "the world that lieth in wickedness," either founds his persuasion absolutely on nothing, or on an immediate revelation,—on a preternatural discovery of a matter of fact, on which the Scriptures are totally silent. This absurd notion of unconditional promises, by severing the assurance of salvation from all the fruits of the Spirit, from every trace and feature of a renovated nature, and a regenerate state, opens the widest possible door to licentiousness.

As far as it is sustained by the least shadow of reasoning, it may be traced to the practice of confounding the secret purposes of the Supreme Being with his revealed promises. That in the breast of the Deity an eternal purpose has been formed, respecting the salvation of a certain portion of the human race, is a doctrine which it appears to me is clearly revealed. But this secret purpose is so far from being incompatible with the necessary conditions of salvation, that they form a part of it; their existence is an inseparable link in the execution of the divine decree: for the same wisdom which has appointed the end has also infallibly determined the means by which it shall be accomplished; and as the personal direction of the decree remains a secret, until it is developed in the event, it cannot possibly, considered in itself lay a foundation for confidence. That a certain number of the human race are ordained to eternal life may be inferred from many passages of scripture; but, if any person infers from these general premises that he is of that number, he advances a pro-

position without the slightest colour of evidence. An assurance of salvation can, consequently, in no instance, be deduced from the doctrine of absolute decrees, until they manifest themselves in their actual effects; that is, in that renewal of the heart which the Bible affirms to be essential to future felicity.

But I am detaining the reader too long from the pleasure and advantage he may promise himself from the perusal of the following treatise, where he will meet with no illiberal insinuations, no personal invective,—the too frequent seasoning of controversy, and the ordinary gratification of vulgar minds,—but a series of calm and dispassionate reasonings out of the Scriptures. That they may produce all the beneficial results which the excellent author has so much at heart, is the fervent prayer of the writer of these lines.

ROBERT HALL.

Leicester, July 2, 1819.

A LETTER

TO

THE REV. W. BENNETT,

Author of an Essay on the Gospel Constitution.

January 18, 1810.

Dear Sir,

I ought sooner to have acknowledged to you the great pleasure I derived from the performance you were so kind as to give me at Northampton. I have read it with as much attention as I am able; and, though the subject is involved in so much difficulty, I admired the perspicuity with which it was treated, so as to be within the limits of an ordinary capacity. There is a precision and comprehension in the choice of terms, and a luminous track of thought pervading the whole, which, according to my apprehension, has scarcely been equalled and never exceeded, in the discussion of such points. I do think you have steered a happy medium, between the rigidity of calvinism and the laxness of arminianism, and have succeeded in the solution of the grand difficulty—the consistency between general offers and invitations, and the speciality of divine grace. This interesting question is handled with masterly ability. I am particularly delighted with your explicit statement, and vindication of the established connexion between the use of instituted means and the attainment of divine blessings, and the consequent hypothetical possibility of the salvation of all men, where the gospel comes. On this point, the representations of calvinists

have long appeared to me very defective; and that, fettered by their system, they have by no means gone so far in encouraging and urging sinners to the use of prayer, reading the Scriptures, self-examination, &c., as the Scriptures justify. They have contented themselves too much with enjoining and inculcating the duty of faith, which, however important and indispensable, is not, I apprehend, usually imparted till men have been earnestly led to seek and strive. Here the arminians, such of them as are evangelical, have had greatly the advantage of the calvinists in pleading with sinners. Your great principle of the design of religion, in every dispensation of it, being intended as the pursuit of the plan of divine government for exercising the moral powers and faculties of creatures, is grand and noble, and gives continuity and harmony to the whole scheme. I lent your book to Mr. B——, who is much pleased with it, and only wishes you had expressed yourself more fully in favour of the general extent of Christ's death. I think you have asserted it by implication, though I wish you had asserted it unequivocally, because I am fully persuaded it is a doctrine of scripture, and that it forms the only consistent basis of unlimited invitations. I think the most enlightened calvinists are too reserved on this head; and that their refusal to declare, with the concurrent testimony of scripture, that Christ died for all men, tends to confirm the prejudices of methodists, and others, against election and special grace. With this small exception, if it be an exception, your work appears to me to be entitled to the highest approbation and applause; and I cannot but hope it will have an important effect in bringing good men nearer together; than which I know nothing more desirable. Wishing you much success in every labour of your hands,

I remain, Dear Sir,
With high esteem,
Your affectionate brother,
ROBERT HALL.

AN EXTRACT

FROM

DR. JOHNSON'S PREFACE

TO

COWPER'S CORRESPONDENCE

"I ACCOUNT myself particularly fortunate, in being favoured with the opinion of confessedly one of the best judges of composition that this country has to boast—the Rev. Robert Hall, of Leicester. In a letter addressed to me, on the 19th of August of the present year, 1823, he writes thus:—

'It is quite unnecessary to say that I perused the letters with great admiration and delight. I have always considered the letters of Mr. Cowper as the finest specimen of the epistolary style in our language; and these appear to me of a superior description to the former, possessing as much beauty with more piety and pathos. To an air of inimitable ease and carelessness they unite a high degree of correctness, such as could result only from the clearest intellect, combined with the most finished taste. I have scarcely found a single word which is capable of being exchanged for a better.

'Literary errors I can discern none. The selection of words, and the structure of the periods, are inimitable; they present as striking a contrast as can well be conceived to the turgid verbosity which passes at present for fine writing, and which bears a great resemblance to the degeneracy which marks the style of Ammianus Marcellinus, as compared to that of Cicero or of Livy. A

perpetual effort and struggle is made to supply the place of vigour, garish and dazzling colours are substituted for chaste ornament, and the hideous distortion of weakness for native strength. In my humble opinion, the study of Cowper's prose may, on this account, be as useful in forming the taste of young people as his poetry.

'That the letters will afford great delight to all persons of true taste, and that you will confer a most acceptable present on the reading world by publishing them, will not admit of a doubt.'"

THE

SPIRITUAL CONDITION AND PROSPECTS

OF

THE JEWS.

[Written in 1826, for a periodical publication.]

Few perhaps are to be found who have made religion the object of their serious attention, who have not bestowed some thought on the spiritual condition and prospects of the Jews, a people on many accounts the most remarkable of any that have appeared on the stage of time. Intermingled with all nations, but uniting with none,—distinguished by their attachment to one portion of revelation, and their aversion to another,—equally removed from the errors of polytheism, and the belief of christianity, they occupy a station peculiar to themselves: "they dwell alone, and are not reckoned among the people." In this state of seclusion, it seems generally taken for granted that they are not only enduring the frown of Providence, but they are universally under the divine malediction, exposed to the doom of the impenitent and unbelieving. Their disbelief of the gospel is supposed without any exception, to render them liable to the penalties of eternal death. I have sometimes been tempted to doubt of this; and the design of my addressing you, on the present occasion, is briefly to state the grounds on which my doubts are founded, not with a

view to provoke controversy, but solely to elicit the inquiry of superior minds.

1. An essential difference exists between the Jews and other unbelievers, in a particular of great moment; which is, that they are already in the possession of the oracles of God, and, in these, of all that is absolutely necessary to salvation. That the Old Testament is sufficient to conduct men to eternal life is evident, from the testimony it bears of itself, as well as from the acknowledged scope and design of a revelation; for it would be a reflection on infinite wisdom to suppose it capable of communicating a revelation which necessarily failed in its principal object, that of "making men wise unto salvation." Nor is it less certain that some of the eminent saints and favourites of the Most High flourished under the Jewish dispensation. The doctrines taught by Moses and the prophets, it must be confessed, are in themselves an adequate instrument of sanctification, so that, if he who conscientiously avails himself of it falls short of eternal life, it must be ascribed to the intervention of a subsequent and more perfect revelation.

2. As a subsequent dispensation, however, has been given, enforced by the penalty of eternal death, it may be thought, this is sufficient at once to determine the future condition of those who reject it, and consequently to preclude the unconverted part of the Jews from all hope of salvation. It is agreed that the deliberate rejection of the gospel involves a sentence of condemnation: but that only can be said to be *rejected* which is adequately proposed. By the ancient Jews, christianity was rejected. Our Lord "came to his own, and his own received him not." They heard his discourses; they witnessed his miracles, or at least had the same evidence of them as they had of other matters of public notoriety; they beheld the spotless innocence of his life, and the perfect correspondence of the leading events of his history to the predictions of their prophets; nor was there any prejudice existing against christianity, but what was of recent growth, the pure effect of carnality, impenitence, and hardness of heart. They knew enough of the

christian religion to discern its sanctifying tendency, and to hate it on that account: their rejection of it betrayed an enmity to the true character of God, and therefore incurred all the guilt included in that solemn assertion of our Lord, "But now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father." Their opposition to Christ was not the resistance made to the encroachments of a foreign dominion; it was domestic rebellion. The evidence of christianity was presented in all its force and splendour: it came into actual contact with the mind, and on that very account produced a feeling of hostility to its spirit and its claims, which would not have been felt towards an object more remote.

3. But the position in which christianity stands towards modern Jews is very different. Their knowledge of it must be derived almost entirely from the New Testament, and the causes which may in many instances, be supposed to divert their attention from it, are very dissimilar to those which originated the incredulity of their ancestors. The prohibition of the New Testament is a primary element in Jewish education. The absolute sufficiency of the writings of Moses and the prophets, and the impropriety of presuming to add to these lively oracles, and to abrogate an everlasting law, are among the first principles instilled into the infant mind. They are taught to repose with the utmost confidence on a religion which even christians confess to be of divine origin; while the system which has superseded it is comparatively of recent origin, and little accredited by its efficacy in correcting the vices and forming the manners of its followers. They are told, indeed, that christianity is the sequel and completion of the ancient religion,—that it substantiates its types and accomplishes its prophecies; but they are told so by those whom they have few inducements to regard. Respect for paternal authority, veneration for an illustrious ancestry, deference to age and rank, combine with the fear of innovation, and an attachment though too exclusive, to Moses and the prophets, to keep them ignorant of the New Testament, and consequently estranged from the principal means of

conviction. But the principles which we have alluded to are usually the strongest in the most virtuous and susceptible minds: nor is it difficult to conceive what an effectual bar they may prove to the perusal of the christian records, apart from those criminal prejudices which occasioned the rejection of christianity by their ancestors. The disbelief of christianity, on the part of such as have been trained on christian principles, can seldom, if ever, be imputed to ignorance—convictions must be stifled, and the force of evidence evaded; but the unbelief of modern Jews is the natural consequence of their want of acquaintance with an inspired record.

The portion of revelation which the Jew possesses already contains whatever is absolutely necessary to be known in order to obtain eternal life. Jews and christians, at variance about every thing else, unite their suffrages in its favour, affirming unanimously that it was for upwards of two thousand years the authentic revelation of the will of heaven. A Jew, therefore, cannot doubt of its competence to make him wise unto salvation. On the other hand, he is taught from a quarter which God and nature enjoin him to revere, to look upon the New Testament as an imposture. In this instance, it is but candid to suppose that the records of our religion are neglected, not always from the love of vice, or the predominance of worldly interests, but from a conscientious fear of innovation and dread of impiety. He is necessarily ignorant of a book which never engaged his attention; and that it failed to engage it is the effect of an exclusive, and in that respect only an erroneous, attachment to an inspiration of an earlier date.

4. Supposing him, from these and similar causes, to remain all his life unacquainted with the christian system, and consequently uninfluenced by its doctrines, have we any authority in asserting that he cannot possibly be the subject of divine grace, possessed as he is of an instrument of sanctification, which the Holy Ghost, for ages, condescended to employ? A new revelation can make no alteration in the intrinsic nature of that which precedes it; and, if the Old Testament ever was suffi-

cient to make men wise unto salvation, why should we doubt of its being still competent for that purpose? Had it been the only companion of one that was shipwrecked on a desert island, shall we hesitate to believe that its serious perusal might be instrumental to his salvation? Here indeed the absence of other means of instruction would be the unavoidable consequence of providential arrangements, which cannot with equal propriety be affirmed in the case of our Jew. But, though his ignorance of the New Testament cannot be said to be the necessary consequence of the circumstances attending his birth and education, the obstacles which they may be supposed to present are very powerful, and not at all necessarily complicated with deep moral pravity. The utmost tenderness of conscience, the greatest solicitude for salvation, could not be supposed to prevent a youth strictly educated in the principles of judaism from contracting prejudices against christianity, the natural operation of which would be to indispose him to the perusal of its inspired records. The agency of the Spirit is of a moral, not a physical nature; nor is it his manner to interfere with the action of natural causes.

5. Admitting, however, that as much criminality attaches to the prejudice which keeps a conscientious Jew ignorant of the New Testament as the most zealous will contend for, it appears to be of the same order with that which operates in other instances, without our suspecting for a moment that it is incompatible with salvation. What shall we say of the prejudice which prompted such men as Pascal and Fenelon to reject the protestant doctrine, with which they were far better acquainted than a modern Jew can be supposed to be with the christian Scriptures? The opportunities which they enjoyed, for satisfying themselves of the truth of the reformed religion, were, at least, equal to those which a Jew possesses for becoming an enlightened convert to the christian faith; and the circumstances, whatever they were, that indisposed those illustrious men to the impartial examination of the lutheran or calvinistic

tenets, were neither more numerous nor more powerful than those which produce a similar indisposition in Jews to investigate the evidence of our holy religion. Nor ought it to be forgotten that it is impossible to continue in the papal communion without committing idolatry, a sin against which the most fearful maledictions of scripture are pointed. Notwithstanding this, however, all candid protestants acknowledge the possibility of salvation within the Romish pale.

With all their prejudices and imperfections, it is contended that they maintained a body of saving truth, which, under the agency of the divine Spirit, was, it is charitably hoped, rendered effectual to their sanctification. But this is precisely the mode of reasoning we adopt in relation to a pious Jew. He also possesses a system of saving truth. He possesses, in the law and the prophets, what our Lord himself has affirmed to contain sufficient motives to repentance, together with that expectation of a future Messiah, and of the spiritual benefits he is appointed to confer, by which saints under the ancient economy were justified. Let it be carefully kept in mind that it is the bare possibility that a Jew, without becoming a convert to christianity, may obtain salvation, for which we contend; or, in other words, that we are not warranted to conclude that the Holy Spirit, on no occasion whatever, deigns to employ the ancient oracles for saving purposes. Of the extreme danger to which the great majority both of Jews and papists are exposed, and of the strict propriety of speaking of them in the mass as in a state of alienation from God, we entertain no doubt; while we would indulge a hope, for similar reasons in both cases, that there will be found among both some with the "mark of God on their foreheads." The denunciations of divine vengeance on the patrons and supporters of the Roman hierarchy in the Apocalypse are as awful as words can express, and conceived in very general terms: "The smoke of their torment ascendeth," says John, "for ever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his

name;" yet, notwithstanding these fearful menaces, we venture a charitable opinion of many who have been entangled in the errors of papacy. We presume to hope that the merciful God will distinguish between the impious inventor of a system, and those who, without imbibing its spirit, have, in different degrees, been duped by its sophistry. And why should not a similar judgement be formed respecting a serious and conscientious Jew?

6. The question before us is, properly speaking, a question *de jure*, rather than, *de facto:* it does not so properly relate to the fact whether there are any Jews in a state of salvation, who are not converts to christianity, as to the possibility of the thing. We know so little of the real character of modern Jews, insulated as they are from general society that it is difficult to speak with any degree of positivity on that subject. A general and superficial view of that people would tempt us to form the most melancholy conclusion. But I have been informed by a learned Jew, extensively acquainted with his own nation, that there are to be found amongst them men of a very different stamp from what is generally prevalent. He solemnly assured me that he knew one Jew in particular, a foreigner, who was accustomed to spend the night preceding their great fast, in the synagogue, prostrate in tears and supplications; and, on my asking what he was praying for, he replied, with some quickness, "For the pardon of his sins, and the sins of his people, and for the speedy arrival of the promised Messiah:" he declared, at the same time, that this was not a solitary instance. Admitting this representation to be correct, (and there is nothing in it which exceeds the bounds of credibility,) I should feel little hesitation in believing that "He who delighteth in mercy" would not despise the prayer of such a penitent, because he wanted that explicit knowledge of Christ which was for ages withheld from the Jewish church. Prevented from attending to the evidences of christianity, by the influence of prejudices which it was extremely difficult for him to surmount, and, at all events, not

more criminal than those which kept Fenelon within the trammels of popery, what should induce us to form such an opposite judgement, in two cases, as to place the latter in the list of eminent saints, while we consign the former to destruction? Dark as popery is, we must allow that the respective degrees of illumination enjoyed in the two cases were very unequal, but the fainter of the two we must either confess is in itself saving, or give up the patriarchs and prophets for lost.

Perhaps it is unnecessary to remind your readers, that while I plead for the possibility of a Jew's obtaining salvation without that clear and explicit knowledge of Christ which christians possess, I am far from supposing two distinct methods of salvation: whoever are justified, whether under the Jewish or christian economies, are alike justified by faith in the Messiah. But I am at a loss to perceive why that more vague and imperfect knowledge of his character supplied by Moses and the prophets, which formerly availed for that purpose, should necessarily be ineffectual now.

7. These views are, in my humble opinion, considerably confirmed by the tenour of the prophetic writings, which seem on various occasions to recognize a relation as all along subsisting between the Supreme Being and the Jews, previously to the period of their accession to the christian church. It appears to me evident, from ancient prophecy, that the scene of the future conversion of the Jews is their own land, where, it is probable, from Zechariah, that a supernatural interposition of the Messiah will take place in their favour, that he will suddenly reveal himself to them as a nation, and thus effect the accomplishment of the remarkable prediction recorded in the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of that prophecy. Before their final deliverance, however, we read of a severe purgation which they are destined to undergo, during which two parts shall be cut off, and a third only left, and that the third part is to be brought through the fire, and to be refined as silver is refined, and to be tried as gold is tried. "They shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, It is my

people, and they shall say, The Lord is my God." To the same purpose the prophet Ezekiel, where predicting, as I conceive, the final restoration of the Jews to their own land, tells us that previously to that event, the Lord "will plead with them in the wilderness of the people, as he pleaded with their fathers in the wilderness of Egypt; that he will bring them into the bond of the covenant, purge out from them the rebels and those that transgress, so that they shall not enter into the land of Israel:" and he adds, "Ye shall know that I am the Lord."

The latter chapters of Ezekiel, describing the erection of a certain temple, are involved in so much obscurity, that it seems difficult to arrive at any determinate conclusion respecting the import of that mysterious prophecy. It is certain that the attempt to spiritualize it produces little besides perplexity and confusion; nor have we any example in scripture of an allegory so perfectly dark and enigmatic as it must be confessed to be on that supposition. The third chapter of Hosea seems to present us with a just and striking picture of the present condition of the Jews; they have remained "many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without a teraphim." Separated alike from christians and from heathens, they still retain their conjugal relation to the Lord; they are under his frown, but not severed from his covenant, and occupy a peculiar and intermediate station between the members of the christian church and the worshippers of idols.

The preceding remarks, let it be remembered, are designed to apply not to the great mass of the Jewish people, who appear to be in a state of deep alienation from God, but solely to such among them (if such there be) as are conscientious disciples of Moses and the prophets, and who, though they are destitute of the superior illumination of the gospel, faithfully improve the light which they enjoy.

The chief practical use to be derived from the hypothesis which I have ventured to suggest, is to inspire us

with an increased tenderness and respect for the seed of Abraham, as containing, notwithstanding its occupying a distinct fold, a portion of the true church of God. If we can be induced to hope that he has still a people among them, we shall be ready to look upon them with something like fraternal affection, and to embrace every opportunity of reprobating and removing the cruel privations and restrictions imposed by christian nations, who, absurdly imagining that they do an acceptable service to God by their persecution and depression, are in reality treasuring up wrath by aggravating the affliction of those whom he has smitten. It is surprising that any man can read the ancient prophecies with attention, without perceiving that he surveys the treatment of his ancient people with a jealous eye; and that, while he signalizes his displeasure against them by the course of his providence, he will enter into a severe reckoning with those who shall be found "to help on the affliction." A large arrear of guilt has been contracted by the nations of christendom on this account; and in this age of liberality, when such mighty efforts are made to procure the removal of political disabilities on the score of religion, it is surely high time their attention was turned to the relief of the oppressed and persecuted children of Abraham. Their political emancipation, and restoration to the equal rights of citizenship, might be reasonably expected to soften their prejudices, and dispose them to a more favourable hearing of the christian cause; nor could any thing be more becoming the character and pretensions of the Jewish Society, than to take the lead in that noble enterprise. As the basis of all social virtue is laid in justice, so by none should its obligations be deemed more sacred than by those who make loud professions of christian zeal and exalted charity.

Having thus freely stated my present opinions upon a subject which I think has not often been discussed, simply with a view to excite inquiry, I have no intention to enter into controversy by defending them, but shall cheerfully leave them to the consideration of your readers.

THE

SUBSTANCE OF A CHARGE,

DELIVERED AT THE ORDINATION OF THE REV. J. K. HALL, AT KETTERING, NOV. 8, 1815.

[From the Notes of the Rev. S. Hillyard, of Bedford.]

I SHALL not select any particular passage of scripture, as it is not my intention to confine myself to any one subject, but to communicate such miscellaneous hints of advice as may be suitable to the present occasion.

If, however, I refer to one passage more than another, it will be the exhortation of Paul to Timothy:—"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine."

The solemn transactions of this day will not be done with when the service is closed; they will undergo a review at the tribunal of the great Judge, in whose name we are now assembled. Nothing in this state is final: every thing in time is connected with eternity. The church of Christ here, who have chosen you for their pastor, and you, my brother, who have accepted this office, will have your determinations, your motives, and your ends adjudged by "Him who seeth not as man seeth," and will meet with a reward according to their sincerity and purity.

You now stand as a watchman, situated on an eminence; if you see danger you must "blow the trumpet," and warn the people, that "he that taketh warning may

deliver his soul;" and "if any man take not warning, his blood shall be upon his own head;" if the people be not warned, they may be taken away in their iniquity; but "their blood," saith the Lord, "will I require at the watchman's hands."

You are a steward of the manifold mysteries of God, to bring out of the treasury "things new and old, that every one may have a portion." "Moreover, it is required of a steward that he be found faithful."

The principal duty of this office consists in your engagement to preach the gospel:—"Preach the word."

You will recollect that your work is not to dispense the principles inculcated by any human authority, or supported by any human society. Though the treasure of the gospel be communicated to "earthen vessels," its origin is celestial.

There is, then, little scope for the exercise of invention, or the flights of imagination, in the discharge of this duty: these faculties are employed to find out new principles, or to discover new associations; but their exercise here will only tend to mix truth with error, to "darken counsel by words without knowledge," and to impair that system of truth which God hath furnished, and communicated to man. You are not required to make new discoveries; you need only to inquire and ascertain what is revealed in the word of God; find out what is "the mind of the Spirit," and submit yourself to his instructions. The best method of doing this, in connexion with reading and meditation, is to pray for spiritual illumination, like David, when he said, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wonderful things out of thy law." There are many wonderful things in the law; but we need the Spirit to give us *understanding*, and still more to cause us to feel the influence of truth in our own hearts, and to communicate it to the hearts of others.

There are three things to which you must attend in preaching; the matter, the mode, and the motives: the matter must be pure, the mode "with all gravity," the motives such as are presented in the word of God, and

furnished by your office and your particular station in the church.

In preaching the word, incorruptness, or purity in your matter, is of the first importance: in order to this, adhere to the dictates of the holy Scriptures. I mean not, by this, that you should confine yourself to the words, but to the sentiments: the sentiments may be lost where the words are retained; but the sentiments may be retained and communicated in different expressions.

Preach the word purely and fully; mix nothing with it that does not belong to it, or may not evidently be inferred from its language.

State every doctrine and opinion as near to the mind of the Spirit as you can ascertain, by the most cautious inquiry.

The doctrines of the word you will bring forth in their full import, without concealing them, or endeavouring to melt them down and mould them so as to suit the prejudiced and indolent depravity of the human heart.

The gospel is not suited, nor can it be made to suit, the corrupt dispositions and inclinations of the "carnal mind;" but the faithful preaching of it is calculated to oppose and to overcome those evil prejudices so far as to excite men to attend to the doctrines it contains, and the blessings it proposes. It is your duty, not to bring down the gospel into a conformity with them, but to change them into a conformity with the gospel.

Read the Scriptures frequently, with close attention and fervent prayer. Endeavour to collect as much knowledge relative to revealed truth as you can possibly acquire. Out of the Scriptures you may continually draw new treasures; and if you are "a scribe well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom," you will not find it difficult to present a variety of interesting matter from hence, that shall not only be profitable, but delightful to your hearers.

There are two opposite extremes to be avoided in *the manner* of your preaching the word: the one, a manner

vague and indistinct; the other, a manner too narrow, subtle, and systematical.

Some have preached the gospel rather by implication than by plain direct statements: they have treated it as if there were something in its doctrines that would not bear the exhibition. Such men have made moral instructions the main points of their ministry: the doctrines of the atonement, regeneration, the divinity of the Saviour, and the riches of his grace, if they have not been entirely suppressed, have not occupied that prominent situation which their importance demands for them: and their hearers have consequently been altogether unacquainted with them, or, having but slight hold of them, these things have gradually slidden out of their minds, and left them prepared for heretical instructors. Be not, then, ashamed of the gospel; though it may contradict many of the fashionable and favourite notions of mankind, and though you may find mysteries connected with the subjects of it which you cannot comprehend; yet, as we know but little of the world, and of ourselves less, we must receive with simplicity what God has taught. He *must* "be true, though every man be a liar."—You have taken upon you the solemn charge of "feeding the flock of God," you must keep back no part of what he has provided for them; let it be your concern, that at the end of your ministry you may be able to speak as St. Paul:—"I kept back nothing that was profitable to you: I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

Opposed to the vague and indistinct manner of preaching, is the narrow and systematical method, according to which, doctrines, sometimes not the most important, have been made the themes of remark and discussion, to the neglect of every other subject.

The gospel is not revealed in a systematic form; it is not confined to any particular set of doctrines; nor does it ever advance *any* doctrine as *merely* a subject of speculation.

Be upon your guard against confining your adminis-

trations; point out the practical consequences of the doctrines you preach, without which they will not produce that good which they are calculated to yield as they are revealed in the Scriptures. It is of great importance to observe the proportion which truths bear to each other, that we may not dwell upon subjects of comparatively small moment, to the neglect of others that are really weighty. We should not give too much of our attention to any favourite topics, however important; the effect of such a course will be to leave a wrong impression on the minds of the hearers. It will be likely to produce a disproportionate regard to some doctrines, ordinances, and moral duties; which is a similar deformity in the new man to the disproportionate enlargement of any particular member in the human body; and it may be, that such regard to any doctrine, out of its connexion with other revealed truths, will only serve to exhibit it as a subject of speculation, and not of vital and practical utility.

An excellent man was so impressed with the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, that he made it the constant topic of his ministry; every sermon he preached was crowded with proofs, or answers to objections relating to this important topic; and the result was, that most of his hearers became arians and socinians! This effect was not such as he anticipated, or as might be thought of at the time by others; but the consequence was natural. Such discussions produced, first, a dry speculative attention to the subject, then a fiery and contentious spirit in discussion; in this state the spirit of the doctrine was lost, and the people sunk into such a frame of mind as is suited to the reception of these or any other heresies that might be sophistically presented to them. A serious, spiritual state of mind is that which you must be concerned to promote in your hearers, as the best preservative against error: and, in order to this, you must proclaim both the doctrinal truth, and the practical exhortations of religion.

There has been long laid down a rule, which is often repeated, and is most excellent, and worthy of constant

recollection: it is, that we must "preach the doctrines practically, and preach practice doctrinally." Preach the doctrines so as to show their influence on our practice, and recommend religious and virtuous conduct by evangelical motives. This happy combination will form a complete course of religious instruction. It is impossible to say which of these two, doctrinal or practical preaching, is most necessary; or which extreme is most dangerous---to preach doctrine without practice, or practice without doctrine. Read, then, the Scriptures of the New Testament, in order to observe how these are blended together by our Lord and his inspired apostles. You will observe *there*, that the enforcement of duties, by evangelical motives, is the very end of the gospel: and all preaching is good and estimable, only as it secures the same end by the same motives.

Be not afraid of devoting whole sermons to particular parts of moral conduct and religious duties. It is impossible to give right views of them, unless you dissect characters, and describe particular virtues and vices. The "fruits of the flesh," and the "fruits of the Spirit," must be distinctly pointed out. To preach against sin in general, without descending to particulars, may lead many to complain of the evil of their hearts, at the same time that they are awfully inattentive to the evil of their conduct.

You are aware, that to inculcate the necessity of regeneration is a large part of your work, and must not, on any account, be neglected; but it must not be so taught as to lead men to suppose that if they are once regenerated, they may be careless and indifferent, for then they are sure of heaven. If you do not often address them with the utmost importunity, to guard them against sin, and to animate them to holiness, you will be chargeable with neglect. You must warn the righteous man that he turn not from his righteousness, as well as assure the wicked man that he will perish if he persevere in his wickedness. If serious admonitions are neglected, the preaching of regeneration itself may be hurtful, by leading numbers to suppose, that, having

passed the ordeal, nothing now remains but for them to wait their entrance into heaven, for which they will think they are already prepared. There is, we deeply lament, a sort of evangelical ministry which produces no effect but to awaken to a sudden apprehension of danger, and then to consign, by means of opiates, to the delusive and destructive stupidity of spiritual death.

When no pains are taken to warn the awakened of the necessity of deep repentance, of living faith, of persevering obedience, of unceasing vigilance, and of renewed conflicts, even unto the end, they are in danger of fancying they are "rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing," though they are "miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

Remind them that, when they enter on a christian profession, they only put on the armour: admonish them of the obligations they are under to be holy and active. They have entered as soldiers of the cross, they have taken the military oath; but merely to take that, is not to perform the duty of a soldier. The display of bravery is to be made in the day of conflict, in their watching, standing, striving, and putting to flight the enemies of their salvation.

Exhort them, therefore, incessantly, that they "walk worthy of their high calling;" that they walk "as becometh the gospel of Christ;" that they "draw not back unto perdition;" that they be faithful unto death, that they may obtain "the crown of life."

I will now proceed to notice briefly those parts of your work which are not immediately connected with preaching the word; "Be instant in season, out of season," said the apostle. While engaged in ministering the word, you are instant in season; but you should also attend to your duties out of season, when it is not a time for preaching.

Remember, *this* people is *your charge.* When they are absent from you, bear them in your mind: let them have an interest in your prayers when you have retired to your closet: though they are your charge you cannot be always speaking to them; but they must be engraved

on your heart, as the high priest bore the names of the tribes of Israel. The good shepherd is acquainted with all his sheep.

The excellent Booth has said, "He that does not pray oftener for his people than with them, neglects an important part of his duty." It will endear them to you, and draw out your affections to them, if you pray much for them, and it will secure, through the divine blessing, your usefulness amongst them. You are, as an intercessor, to "stand in the breach;" and, whatever difficulty or danger may oppose, you must be, like another Moses, between God and the people.

Not only is secret prayer for them a great duty; but an habitual remembrance and affectionate respect for them must be cultivated when you are not, as well as when you are, ministering to them the word of life.

"Watch for them as one that must give an account:" take every favourable opportunity of speaking to them on the great concerns of eternity, and the weighty subjects of revealed truth. If you see any of them departing from the right way into that of sin, remember it is said, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother, but shalt reprove him." A neglect of reproof in such circumstances would have all the bad consequences of hatred; for thus he would be left to lie under the greatest evil from which you might deliver him. No fear of giving offence should prevent you from reproving, with meekness and faithfulness, the most opulent, or even the most valued friends of the society, if it be needful. If their misconduct does not require to be brought before the church, yet do not neglect to speak to them in private, and administer what counsel or reproof the circumstances may demand.

Your people will look to you, as a minister, for consolation when they are in distress; when overwhelmed with personal, domestic, or other relative calamities: manifest towards them the tenderest sympathy, a disposition "to weep with them that weep," as well as to "rejoice with them that rejoice."

It will be especially your duty to attend to those who are beginning to seek and inquire after salvation. No

part of your office is more delicate than the giving instruction to awakened consciences, who desire rest, but know not where or how to obtain it. The impressions they have received are in danger of wearing off; sometimes they seem pressing forward, sometimes they seem drawing backward; sometimes they are the pupils of conscience, at others the pupils of appetite and custom.

Such will require great attention; and not to seize opportunities of advising and directing them, would be to neglect a duty in which you ought to abound. It is not for me to instruct you fully *how* you should do this. Be not, however, afraid to inculcate repentance. Teach them to expect salvation, not *for* their works, but *in* a course of attention to all the dictates of the divine will respecting faith and obedience. Cherish in them tenderness of conscience, guard them against "easily besetting sins," and, at the same time, warn them not to stop at any outward reformation, but to seek after an inward change, and the application of the blood of Jesus. Admonish them not to consider themselves as having already attained, or being already perfect; not to mistake what is preparatory for what is final, or to rest short of that connexion with Christ and conformity to him which are the pledge and commencement of life eternal.

Here we need divine assistance: it is best to learn these things in answer to prayer, and by habitual practice. As nothing but much practice, and an exact knowledge of the anatomy of the human frame, will make a skilful physician; so nothing but a knowledge of the human heart, and the efficacy of the gospel in healing the diseases of the soul, can teach us to bring men health and cure.

It will be useful to "exhort with much long-suffering, from house to house:" much is to be accomplished by those who have a talent for interesting and familiar religious conversation,—a talent which all should cultivate. Some ministers, by an exhibition of "the mind of Christ," and a recommendation of the truth, in private, have advanced religion even more than by their public ministry;

as an auxiliary, every one will find it beneficial, and it is impossible to overvalue it.

See that your social visits are conducted in the spirit of the gospel. Guard against levity. Whatever is innocent in mirth, if it be allowed, should only hold a subordinate place; and the dignity of the minister should always appear.

Do not seek to cultivate the good opinion and favour merely of those who are rich, or even of those who are endowed with intellectual treasures; nor seek the gratifications of the table, nor the indulgence of sensual appetites. Despise not the meanest of the flock; look not on them with eyes of the flesh, but with the eyes of the Spirit. You will then perceive that the distinctions of wealth, or education, or intellect, are but little, compared with the state of *all* as responsible and immortal beings. The points of difference in men are nothing, compared with the common capacity for knowing and enjoying God. They are to be regarded principally as vessels capable of experiencing the wrath, or receiving the mercy, of the Almighty.

Look upon them now, as you will look upon them on a dying bed: you will not think of them *then* as rich or poor, as learned or unlearned; but as sanctified or unsanctified, as "sheep or goats," as the righteous or the wicked, as persons with whom you are to rejoice for ever, or whose final ruin you must witness at the last day. Let nothing render you negligent of the improvement and comfort of any one. Remember who hath said, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the depths of the sea." There is not *one* whose soul is not precious in the estimation of the Lord, not one for whom he has not shed his blood, not one for whom he would not have been ready to shed his blood, had no other soul existed. Let the dignity of human nature, viewed in this light, arm you against being imposed upon by any adventitious circumstance.

In order that you may attend to these duties aright, cultivate a devotional spirit. The more you have of the mind of Christ, the more you walk in holiness and humility, the more " will your profiting appear." Watch against spiritual, as well as intellectual pride. Prostrate yourself in deep abasement before God. Remember, if you are saved, it is by an exercise of divine mercy, by an act of grace, which is the subject of admiration among the angels of God; and nothing is more incongruous than for " such an one" to be proud of any qualities he has received. Let it be evident that you are a good man, and one that makes progress in the things of God. This will produce a great effect. There is a silent eloquence in character, by which the best sermons are most powerfully recommended. Let *them*, however, be delivered with all sincerity, gravity, and affection: never speak with lightness or indifference; beware of all levity of spirit and of manner; avoid all canting and hypocritical terms and phrases; consider the weight of the subject before you; never study theatrical effect; all gestures and manœuvres, and display of *self*, by which some divines obtain so great admiration, are unworthy of your subject and your office. A sound preacher of the gospel will produce, not admiration of *himself*, but of the *truth*, and adoration of that God and Saviour from whom all truths proceed; remembering that awful account which ministers and people will all have to give, when they meet before his judgement-seat.

Sincerely aim to do good, and the Lord will be with you. Mr. Baxter said he never knew a minister who was sincerely desirous of benefiting souls that was not blessed with considerable success. The more you can go out of self, and lose all recollection of your own importance; the more you are impressed with the love of souls, the more will you be likely to manifest that truth which recommends itself " to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

Let the consciences of your hearers be the subjects of your concern. Address their understanding and affec-

tions chiefly for the purpose of getting at their consciences.

I am aware of the difficulty of your situation, in consequence of your succeeding our most invaluable and incomparable brother, Mr. Fuller. It is not possible that you should, at present, attain to that profundity of mind, those extensive views, and that pointed statement of truth, which were possessed and evinced by him; but even the difficulty thus arising may be of use to you, as a stimulus to excite you to greater exertions. Should you be tempted to indolence, (which, however, I have no reason to suspect you will indulge,) the recollection of serving a people who have been blessed with such a minister, the consideration of what they will expect, may serve to rouse and animate you in your work.

Another circumstance I may refer to, as a motive peculiar to your present situation; and that is, the respectable minority which have been opposed to you. This may also be overruled to your advantage, if you are more watchful over your temper and conduct (I do not say than you have been, but) than you might have been if you had been carried down the stream of universal applause; and, if it excite you to conciliation and kindness towards those who oppose themselves, it may have the happiest effect on their minds, and will certainly raise and establish your character as a minister of the meek and lowly Saviour.

I need not warn you, because you have always guarded against any thing personal in your ministry towards those who have not fixed their choice on you. You will be ready to treat them with the same kindness which you manifest to others. It is not to be wondered at, (considering whom you follow, and some particular circumstances which are well known, but need not be mentioned,) that there should be a part of the church who could not act with the rest in their choice; but it will be well if you can manage these circumstances for your advantage and the furtherance of the gospel.

I shall not detain you longer than to remind you

whence it is that you are to derive the strength and wisdom necessary to prepare you for your work; and I cannot do this better than in the language of Paul to Timothy, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus!" Be strong! How strangely does this exhortation sound! To tell a man that is weak to be strong, would be absurd; but what would be absurd in philosophy is true and perfectly consistent with the gospel. Be strong in the grace of Christ, for his grace is communicable; and the power of Christ rests on those who seek it with a sense of their own weakness.

We are directed to seek it by prayer, and thus to be strong. Look to the Lord for all the assistance you need. Remember how dependent you are. Look to the Father and the Son: be not afraid of praying to the Son of God as Paul did; it is often more consolatory than prayer in any other form.*

You are a sinner redeemed; but you are a preacher of the word placed over this people, not to tyrannize, but to walk before them in the Lord: in hearing your voice, they should hear him; in following your footsteps, they should follow him. Your employment is that of the Son of God: it makes no appearance before the eyes of worldly men; but it will arise in a form of majesty to overshadow all created glory. Its effects will be known and felt in souls that shall enjoy Christ in his kingdom for ever, or in spirits in whom the work of death shall be finished.

Keep the commandments of Christ committed to you, without reproach. Endeavour to "present every man faultless before God." Your happiness will be diminished if one be wanting. Be concerned to "give up your account with joy, and not with grief."

Labour, that not one of those that hear you, not one that has sat down at the table of the Lord, not one to whom you have "given the right hand of fellowship," should be excluded when the Lord cometh.

See to it, that you are not excluded yourself. So

* See letter to W. Hollick, Esq. Vol. I. p. 344.—Ed

preach as to "save yourself, and them that hear you." It is possible for a man to bring others to Christ for salvation, and yet not be saved himself. You may preach to others, and yet be a castaway. You need grace, but do not despair. The grace of the Saviour is sufficient for you: "His strength shall be made perfect in your weakness."*

* Mr. John Keen Hall, to whom this charge was addressed, was Mr. Hall's nephew; a circumstance which, while it may serve to account for the minuteness of some of the exhortations, in my judgement adds to their interest. Mr. J. K. Hall, who had been Mr. Fuller's colleague, survived him only fifteen years: he died in 1829.

Mr. Hillyard, to whose kindness I am indebted for the notes here published, is anxious it should be understood that his main object was to preserve *the substance* of the charge. It was seldom, indeed, that he succeeded in catching the precise language; and, towards the end, several sublime and most impressive sentences were entirely lost, from his yielding himself to the stream of feeling excited by the preacher.—Ed.

ON THE ART OF HEALING.

[FROM MR. HALL'S OWN NOTES. NOT PUBLISHED BEFORE.]

MATT. ix. 12.—*But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*

THAT the sick need a physician,* is an assertion which appeals to the dictates of common sense. Among the innumerable benefactions issuing from a wise and gracious Providence, the art of healing is not to be considered as the least. For, though it is far from having reached the perfection which we naturally desire, or which may be attainable, its efficiency is such, as ought to inspire the most unfeigned gratitude to the Author of every good and perfect gift. By the cure of many, and the mitigation of most, of the diseases to which the human frame is incident, the total amount of ease, comfort, and refreshment, which it confers, is incalculable. In judicious hands it is the handmaid of nature, while it obeys her indications and assists her efforts. It never acts apart, but always in a vigilant and judicious subserviency to her fundamental laws and her salutary tendencies. It is well known that there is in all living substances a certain *vis medicatrix*, a certain effort at self-provision, an inherent and powerful tendency to recover itself from the injury it may have sustained, a principle of active resistance to the progress of disease and decay. A property of this kind seems to be inseparable from

* This constituted part of a sermon that was preached for the Leicester Infirmary, from the above text, on Sunday, May 29, 1825.—ED.

life in all its diversified modes and appearances; and nothing, surely, can afford a plainer demonstration of the benign character of the Deity.

When a bone is fractured, nothing more is necessary than to place the parts, which accident has separated, in their original juxta-position, and they will very soon adhere; an exudation from the bones takes place, which forms a collar of so firm a texture, that the parts often become more perfectly united than before: it is scarcely ever known that a bone is fractured twice in the same place. When the fleshy parts are separated by a wound, and a considerable chasm ensues, the self-restorative power of nature forms new flesh, produces a new set of vessels for the circulation of the blood: the interstice is filled up, and the continuity of the parts is by degrees perfectly restored. The indication of design in such a process is just as evident as in restoring communication betwixt two places, by repairing the broken arches of a bridge.

In constant subserviency to this mysterious law, the skilful physician explores the secret affinities subsisting betwixt the living substance which composes the body and the material elements which surround it. By a sublime process of experiment and induction, he has ascertained, to a great extent, the relation which the corporeal frame sustains to the various objects, both natural and artificial, with which the stores of nature are fraught. He has extorted her secrets, and has summoned her powers in aid of human distress and infirmity. He has fetched from the bowels of the [earth], from the caverns of the ocean, and from the boundless fields of air, the most powerful antidotes to disease. He has levied a contribution from all the departments and provinces of nature, and compelled them to yield their service to man, in all the varieties of physical disorder to which he is exposed; and, whether it be requisite to brace or to relax the [fibres] of the breathing frame, to retard or to accelerate its motion, to stimulate or to depress, to quicken its energies or to allay its agitations, he makes them minister to his purpose, and become the

agents of his will. He has discovered the art of converting into useful ingredients, substances deemed essentially noxious, and of extracting antidotes from poisons. Thus he vindicates from rash and presumptuous imputations the beneficence of nature or of its great Author, by showing that all which "he has made is very good."

A large portion of the ingenuity and industry of mankind is incessantly exerted in multiplying the pleasures of the opulent, giving a higher zest to the fruitions of luxury, and gratifying the caprices of vanity and pride; and, such is the mechanism of society, that even from these the poor are fed and the indigent relieved. With the physician, however, it is far otherwise. He interposes in the moment of exigence, and obeys the call of distress. He administers the cordial to the fainting spirit, rekindles the expiring lamp of hope, and [often] decks the countenance with smiles, which death, under the ravages of disease, had marked for his victim and covered with his shade. He leaves it to others to accompany the human race in their revelry and their triumphs: while they bask on the bosom of the ocean, or spread their sails to the wind, he presents himself on the shore, and rescues the shipwrecked mariner from the waves. With a silent and invisible energy he contends with the powers of destruction, and often rescues from the grave him that [seemed] "appointed to death."

If he conducts the objects of his care sometimes through painful processes, his proceeding resembles, in that respect, the conduct of the gracious Author of our being, who afflicts with paternal reluctance, and smites but to heal. From the practice of an enlightened professor of the healing art, nothing is more remote than the infliction of unnecessary suffering, or wanton and unfeeling experiments on the powers of human endurance. His hand never administers an uneasy sensation, but with a view to the future comfort of his patient: nor is he the author of a single privation or restraint but what is designed for his good.

Considered in their leading features, its ministrations are a beautiful imitation of those of Divine Providence.

Both are designed to restore what is lost, and to repair what is disordered; both have the production of ease and happiness for their ultimate object; both frequently make use of pains and privations as the means of procuring it, but neither of them [employ] an atom more of these than is deemed requisite for that purpose.

Hence it will probably be found that the medical profession has furnished more examples of active and enlightened humanity than any other walk or profession. Being daily and hourly conversant with scenes of misery the contrary, it would seem at first, might have been expected. It might have been thought that habit would render [medical men] callous and indifferent to those varieties of suffering that so frequently offer themselves to their view. That the effect of such familiarity is to impair the force of pity, considered merely as an emotion may be very probable. It is well it is so; for if their nerves were unstrung, and their hand to tremble at the witnessing of pain and agony, like those who were unused to such spectacles, they would be totally disabled from executing their functions. But humanity, considered as an active propensity to alleviate human distress, is improved and maintained in wholesome exercise by the benevolence of the end, notwithstanding the occasional severity of the means. The mind of a physician is continually pregnant with expedients for the mitigation of pain, the extinction of disease, and the prolongation of life; a course of thinking which cannot fail to cultivate and mature the seeds of benevolence. His success is in exact proportion to the benefits he imparts: his triumphs are signalized by the tears of gratitude, the gratulations of friendship, and the raptures of returning health.

How striking is the contrast betwixt the art of medicine and the art of war! The last has for its object the destruction, the first the preservation, of the species. The mind of the warrior teems with machinations of ruin, and anxiously revolves, among different schemes that present themselves, which shall scatter destruction to the widest extent and with the surest aim: his pro-

gress is marked by devastation and blood, by depopulated fields and smoking villages, and the laurels which he wears are bedewed with the tears of widows and orphans. The acclamations which he wins from one portion of his species are answered by the curses and execrations of another; and the delusive splendour, the proud and imposing array, with which he contrives to gild the horrors of his profession, are but the pomp and retinue of the king of terrors.* The art of healing proceeds with a silence and secrecy, like the great processes of nature, to scatter blessings on all within its reach; and the couch of sickness the silent retreat of sorrow and despair, are the scene of its triumphs.

The little applause which is bestowed on physicians, compared with what is so lavishly heaped on conquerors, conveys a bitter reflection on human nature; by showing how much we suffer ourselves to be the dupes of our senses, to extol the brilliant rather than the useful; whereas, a just and impartial estimate would compel us to assign to skilful practitioners of medicine the very first rank among merely human professions. For, when we consider the varieties of ills to which we are exposed, and how large a portion is derived from bodily infirmities, it will appear that we are more indebted to their assistance than to [that of] any other class of persons whatever.

Nor are the reflections in which we have indulged, and the train of thought we have pursued, foreign to the immediate purpose of the present discourse, which is to invite your assistance in repairing the funds of the Leicester Infirmary, an institution which you are aware has been productive of incalculable good. Open to the sick of all denominations, it assembles within its walls the victims of poverty and disease of every description, and provides for them the most suitable diet, skilful advice, and assiduous attentions; of each of which the greater part of its patients must necessarily have remained destitute, but for this excellent charity. If we

* The author seems here to have borrowed a little, perhaps unconsciously, from himself. See Vol. II. p. 73, &c.—Ed.

are convinced of the utility and dignity of the medical and chirurgical arts; if we are satisfied how much they contribute to the comfort and the preservation of life, we are prepared to appreciate the value of that charity which proposes for its object the extension of these advantages to the poor; nor is it possible to extend them so far by any other provision as by the support of a public asylum.

To administer equal medical assistance and attendance to an equal number at their own abodes, would be accompanied by an augmentation of expense which would render it insupportable. By collecting the victims of disease in our asylum, and placing them under one system of administration, not only is economy consulted by an immense saving of expense; but the improvement of science is promoted, by presenting a wide field of observation on the great varieties of malady which fall under the notice of the practitioners.

By this system also, a course of wholesome religious instruction is secured, under circumstances the most favourable to its reception.

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The chemical lectures, delivered by the ablest professors in our public hospitals, furnish the most important branch of medical instruction, and are adapted to benefit generations yet unborn.

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The erection of hospitals and infirmaries for the poor, is one of the distinguishing ornaments and fruits of christianity, unknown to the wisdom and humanity of pagan times. Compassionate consideration of the poor formed no part of the lessons of pagan philosophy; its genius was too arrogant and lofty to stoop to the children of want and obscurity. It soared in sublime speculation, wasted its strength in endless subtleties and debates; but, among the rewards to which it aspired, it never thought of "the blessedness of him that considereth the poor." You might have traversed the Roman empire, in the zenith of its power, from the Euphrates to the Atlantic, without meeting with a single charitable asylum

for the sick. Monuments of pride, of ambition, of vindictive wrath, were to be found in abundance; but not one legible record of commiseration for the poor. It was reserved for the religion, whose basis is humility, and whose element is devotion, to proclaim with authority, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

There are few of us, I trust, who are prepared to regard the privations of poverty alone, with indifference; much less when, combined with sickness, its victim is reduced to the last stage of helplessness. When the hands which ministered, not only to their own necessities but to those of a numerous family, are debilitated with disease, and unnerved with sickness, the most complicated distress must necessarily ensue. Were it not for the ministration of piety, the calamity would be insupportable. In many situations, the earnings of labour are but barely sufficient for the sustenance of life on its lowest terms; no savings can be made; no superfluity be retrenched; and what must be the state of such a family when that labour is suspended by the invasion of disease? But for such asylums as these, the consequences would be too dreadful for human contemplation.

(Sickness incident to all, and therefore a proper object of commiseration.)

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END OF VOL. IV.

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